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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE EARLIEST GOSPEL

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BY

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LONDON
JAMES CLARKE & CO., LIMITED
9 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C. 2
(LATE OF 13 AND 14 FLEET STREET, E.C.)

DS 33 88
.C5 A9
1917

TO

THE MEMORY OF A SAINTED FATHER

WHO FIRST TAUGHT ME

TO READ THE NEW TESTAMENT

Printed in Great Britain

729968

PREFACE

It is perhaps not easy to write anything very new or original regarding the Synoptic problem; indeed, very few fresh avenues of thought have been left unexplored so far as the New Testament is concerned. It is not the object of the following work to be specially concerned with critical questions, and as a matter of fact these have only been introduced where it seemed necessary to do so for the advancement of the main theme of the book. The line of study is rather of an historical character, and the chief desire has been to present a portrait of our Lord as He is shown so vividly at work in the Gospel according to St. Mark. There are many excellent books setting forth in considerable detail the life of Christ, but not many with the distinct object of focussing the mind of the reader upon the presentation of Him given in a particular Gospel; it seemed, therefore, as if there was still room for such a work as the following. It probably will be admitted that to gain the first impressions Jesus made upon those with whom He came earliest into contact would be worth a great deal of trouble and research. To trace the development of the Messianic conceptions and the awakening of the faith of the disciples will be found a work of great interest. In most debatable questions the author has inclined to the conservative side; he felt constrained to do this partly because his inclinations lay in that direction, but more especially because he desired to be faithful to the

simple story which the Gospel seems to tell. This story must be regarded as of exceeding importance to Christian people, for if the connection of St. Peter with it has been established, and we think it has, then many—perhaps most—of the things it records rest on his authority as an eyewitness. It is impressive to reflect that while the Gospel according to St. Mark was at first regarded with disfavour and considerably neglected, it has at last come into its own. Perhaps some credit for that is due to modern criticism.

Acknowledgment has been made in the body of the work where quotations have been used, but especial thanks are due to those teachers and professors under whose supervision the author has studied the New Testament. Mention is particularly made of the late Rev. Prof. R. H. F. Dickey, D.D., Londonderry; the late Rev. Prof. Marcus Dods, D.D., New College, Edinburgh; and of the Rev. Prof. H. A. A. Kennedy, D.Sc., of the same college. But still more special acknowledgment ought to be made of the author's indebtedness to the Rev. Prof. W. A. Curtis, D.D., D.Litt., of Edinburgh University. It was his privilege to attend some of Prof. Curtis' post-graduate classes when the subject of study was the earliest Gospel; and from these lectures and discussions as well as from private advice much benefit was derived. In the hope that those who read the following pages may be as much helped and stimulated as the author has been in writing them, this book is submitted to the public.

J. LOGAN AYRE.

THE MANSE, PRESTONPANS,
July 1924.

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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE EARLIEST GOSPEL

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE EARLIEST GOSPEL

It is quite probable that one of the results of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century was a quickened interest in religious art in addition to the revived and widespread enthusiasm for other branches of learning. This will explain the fresh devotion to the painting of religious subjects which we find to have been one of the marked activities of the art of the sixteenth century. Of course something may have been due also to the influence of the Humanistic atmosphere of that period, as well as to the Reformation movement at the beginning of the latter century. There is no doubt that this movement, although it aroused exceedingly bitter feelings, drew men's thoughts directly to the great subjects of religion, and stimulated a new interest in them. Whatever the cause, however, the result has been to provide abundant and interesting pictures of the "Man—Jesus of Nazareth." A study of some of them will show that while there are certain differences in form and expression, there are still even more evident and striking resemblances. This is indeed so noticeable that we never have any difficulty in picking out the form of Jesus from among His companions and

followers, and it would be no exaggeration to state that His likeness has become so stereotyped that he would be a bold artist who would now dare to alter it. But how has the original conception of the figure and form of our Lord arisen; and is there anything reliable or accurate in that presentation of Him so familiar in the present day? As we do not feel inclined to place much reliance on the Veronica tale, so, possibly, we have no satisfactory answer to offer to these questions. Perhaps the similarities point back to a common original, the painter of which we cannot discover, nor do we know the date of its production. The differences will indicate the peculiar ideas and conceptions of each individual artist who has endeavoured to put upon canvas the thoughts, ideals, and inspirations of the Christ that have come to him. There seems to be something analogous in the realm of Christian literature to what we have just found in that of Christian art. The Gospels present us with portraits of Jesus, painted in words, and while there are differences in the detailed working out of these pictures, each separate photograph, if we may use that word, possesses properties and merits peculiar to itself. Yet there is such a unification of idea, of conception and presentation; there are, in fact, such manifest resemblances as lead us to believe the various artists were inspired by, or at least received help from, some common original. And the analogy holds good still further, for we do not know who was the author of this original, nor when or where it was produced. We believe the evidence and the circumstances of the situation, when investigated, point inevitably to the conclusion that it did exist before any of the

word-paintings of the Christ that we now possess. In the study that we are now to enter upon, we shall be engaged with that presentation of Jesus to be found in the earliest Gospel. We are, in fact, to endeavour to appraise at its proper value the picture there painted, and to give particular attention to those special and peculiar contributions to the subject found in this Gospel. We believe the author had a purpose before him in the composition of his work. We shall endeavour to find out what this was, not suggesting for a moment that we are exhausting his plan in the inquiry we have now taken in hand. We shall be content if we can concisely, vividly, and accurately gather together and set forth as a related whole those words, deeds, incidents, and circumstances that appear to have influenced the development of the Messianic idea which we believe runs through the Gospel narrative.

Our subject can very obviously be divided into two main lines of inquiry: (1) to ascertain which is the earliest Gospel; (2) to discover and set forth as plainly as possible the Christological teaching of that Gospel. These two lines, viewed from one aspect, are distinct and separate, yet they are not entirely independent. It is quite evident we must be assured of the one, before we are in a position even to proceed with the other. The whole inquiry is of supreme importance and great interest, for when we have discovered the earliest Gospel, and have ascertained its teaching concerning Christ, we may therein find the earliest portrait, painted in words, of Jesus as He appeared to the first of those writers who have narrated His story in the Gospels. We do not, however, imagine there will be the same necessity

for dwelling at length upon the first section of our subject as upon the second. It cannot be forgotten, even for a moment, that there is on the whole considerable agreement among scholars as to which is the primal Gospel. Still, for various reasons that will be mentioned in detail as we proceed in the discussion of our subject, it will be necessary to give a short résumé of the evidence which leads us to believe that St. Mark's is the earliest of our Gospels in their present form. It is not, however, to be inferred that in doing so there is even a suggestion that we have anything quite new or original to contribute, but this method appears more effective and seems to lead to more completeness in the treatment of the main subject. There is hardly any part of the Synoptic problem that has been left uninvestigated, and that it still remains a problem is not due to lack of attention; even as late as the autumn of 1920, as we shall discover presently, a new attempt was made towards the solution, which was possibly no more successful than many that had gone before. Our object, however, is not to attempt what seems the impossible, but to endeavour to refresh our minds, in the first instance, with the considerations that have led scholars to conclude that the second Gospel, according to the order in the New Testament, was really the first that was written, and to some extent is the basis of certain of the others which succeeded it.

The most casual reader of the New Testament must readily observe that the Gospels can be very effectively arranged into two distinct divisions. In the first we place Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in the second, the Gospel by St. John stands alone.

The subject-matter of the latter, its arrangement, the difference in its presentation of Jesus, gives it a place distinct from the others. It is generally agreed that it was written much later than those in the first division and if St. John was the writer, it must have been composed by him when he was a very old man. Some scholars place it considerably later than Apostolic times, and, of course, do not regard St. John as its author. Prof. Bacon insists that it belongs to what he calls the Pauline School, and his favourite designation for it is the "Ephesian Gospel." We may at once place it aside as not being the earliest, although it was very early regarded as one of the most important of the Gospels.

In considering the elements that form the first division, viz. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we are at once impressed with the similarities that are found in these writings. Whole sections and paragraphs run along the same lines, and identical words in the same connection are used by each of these writers; even particular and peculiar words and phrases are employed by them with precisely the same meaning. The following are a few of the examples, and these might be very greatly enlarged.

Mark 1^{2-6} corresponds with Matt. 3^{1-6}; Mark 1^{16-20} with Matt. 4^{18-22}; Mark 1^{21-28} with Luke 4^{31-37}; Mark 1^{29-34} with Matt. 8^{14-16} and Luke 4^{38-41}. It will be observed that these resemblances have been taken from the first chapter of St. Mark only, but the same condition prevails throughout the greater part of the Gospel. Now, obviously the question will at once arise:

How are these similarities in the Gospels to be explained?

(1) Our grandfathers would have perhaps answered that they were entirely due to the work of inspiration, and that is the reply which might be given by a few people still. As the writers of the three Gospels were all inspired by the same Spirit, and wrote under that Spirit's guidance, it quite follows as the thing to be expected that they would treat the same subject in a similar way, and use even identical words in narrating the incidents recorded by them. But would this theory, and the conception of inspiration which underlies it, not require even more striking resemblances than those we possess? It would, in fact, necessitate absolute identity in thought and word; and our threefold Gospel-cord would thus be broken, and we should only possess a single strand. This explanation would not leave any room for the differences in the Gospels, and these are quite as impressive and as difficult to explain as their resemblances. We need only recall the first chapter in each of the Gospels to realise the exact situation in that respect.

(2) The further answer may be given that the similarity is no more than what the subjects treated in the Gospels might lead us to expect. It must not be forgotten that the writers are, for the most part, dealing with moral and religious material, and in connection with this there were many fixed forms, phrases, and expressions which would come readily to these writers. In any case, they are engaged narrating the story of the life of Jesus. This required in turn that they should deal generally with the same occurrences. It is also to be kept in mind that much of their information was not obtained at first hand, but from other persons who may or

may not have seen the various events taking place. These narrators were likely to become stereotyped in language through the frequent rehearsing of the same stories, and thus it may have been that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, more or less unconsciously, reproduced the language of those who supplied them with details. Indeed, even in the circumstances a certain amount of similarity was to be expected, because the Evangelists were recording particulars of historical events and simple facts, which necessarily would tempt them to drop into a literary groove.

It may be said in a sentence that this will not adequately account either for the resemblances or the differences. Again, we need only appeal to the beginning of each of the three Gospels, or to the various divergences in the story, say of the transfiguration, or that of the resurrection of Jesus, to see that this theory is entirely inadequate to explain the phenomena.

(3) It will now be quite evident that any solution that is offered must be capable of accounting for both the striking harmony as well as the impressive discords found in the Gospel story. Several such theories have been offered; but two are still holding the field, and around these two as standards many a literary battle has been waged. There are a number of scholars, some of them of very considerable repute, who maintain that behind the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which because of their likeness have been called the Synoptic Gospels, there is a large body of fixed tradition; that the story of the life of Jesus was often told in the meeting of the Christians, and that even the children

and catechumens were trained up to commit verbally to memory, and to repeat accurately, large sections of this story, and so in this way, eventually, the greater part of the narrative of the life of Jesus received a fixed form, and hence we have the agreements referred to already. For the differences it is explained that the handing on of this oral tradition from one place to another, and its passing from one generation to another, would provide a way for variety of expression to creep in. For example, a story of some event as told at Jerusalem might differ somewhat when it was told at Antioch; and a tale as related in A.D. 35 might be changed slightly in the version as narrated in A.D. 45.

Opposition has been offered to this theory by many other scholars quite as eminent as those who advocate it; and, again, the ground of objection is its inadequacy to explain fully the phenomena. Obviously it will not account for the general similarity in the order of the narrative, nor for the use of particular words and phrases. Salmon refers to an instance of a parenthesis being preserved in all three Gospels (*Introduction to N.T.*, pp. 121 f.); this theory will not explain such an agreement as that. But apart from the other objections that have been urged against it, does it not appear self-contradictory? On the one hand, in explanation of the similarities in the Gospels, it contends for a fixed form of oral tradition that amounts almost to a written document in its rigidity. On the other, it suggests in explanation of the differences, that this fixedness was not so unyielding as not to permit of modifications by time, place, or circumstance. There may have been such elasticity as is here suggested,

but as a solution of the problem we can hardly regard this as scientifically reliable. Who is to measure the amount of modification in any story that may have taken place? Might not memory often fail? At this point we shall not discuss this theory further, but may require to return to it later.

(4) The other method of solution that holds the field of thought, to a very considerable extent, in regard to this subject is that which is known as the documentary theory. Those who accept it believe that behind our present Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke there were other writings earlier than these, which have been used by the authors of our Gospels in the compositions which bear their names. They are satisfied that this alone will explain the identity of language and the similarity of order in the record of the events found in the Synoptics. For the divergences of the Gospels from each other, the advocates of this theory offer the suggestion that each writer gathered information for himself; used up his matter as he felt best suited his purpose; even, sometimes, departed from the material that was before him; and indeed, that the author of one of the Gospels had no hesitation whatever to copy from another. It was not really a case of copying in the ordinary sense, because it was legitimate for these writers to obtain truth wherever it was to be found. Now, it is quite clear that this method most fully accounts for the phenomena which the Synoptic Gospels present. It may raise difficulties of its own, but it cannot be denied that it offers a very reasonable and, perhaps, we may add, natural explanation of resemblances and

disagreements amongst the three Gospels. In any case, both these theories which we have just referred to make it plain that no one of our present Gospels can be strictly regarded as the earliest, for whether it was a verbal or written source, there was something earlier than any of the three as we now know them.

Those who maintain this last theory are agreed that the writers of our three Gospels are in a measure indebted to one another; or rather that certain of them are indebted to the others. Although for long it was disregarded and neglected, it is now generally accepted that St. Mark's Gospel is older than either St. Matthew's or St. Luke's, and that these latter quote from the former.

If, then, it is so that the authors of our present Gospels took advantage of earlier written records in the production of their work, it is our business to inquire what these were, so that we may ascertain, if it be possible to do so, which really is the earliest Gospel. Most scholars believe in a common original used by the Synoptic writers which has obtained the familiar designation of "Q"—the first letter of "Quelle"=source. We have the feeling, however, that Q is a very elusive document, and many very able scholars have denied its existence altogether. These, of course, belong almost entirely to the oral tradition school already referred to. Probably it would be correct to affirm that the leader of this school is Dr. Arthur Wright, Vice-President of Queens' College, Cambridge, the author of many valuable books on various aspects of the subject—*A Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek*, *The Composition of the Four Gospels*, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, being some of them. He is an unbending opponent

of the documentary theory, and a most energetic and able advocate and exponent of the cause he has espoused. Dr. Bartlet of Oxford, lecturing recently (1920) on the "Synoptic problem," said he had worked twenty years with Q as a working hypothesis, but had now rejected the idea altogether in favour of oral tradition. He further made the somewhat uncommon statement that the reference in Luke's preface does not necessarily refer to written Gospels. He states: "Luke gives no suggestion of any written Gospel, far less of one of apostolic authorship. His statement may be only referred to traditions." Dr. Bartlet now appears to believe there never was a written Q, and that the three Synoptic writers borrowed from a common body of tradition which we may call X. His strongest reason for not accepting the existence of a common original document is because it virtually was another Gospel, and as it must have been of apostolic origin, it was inconceivable that it could have disappeared so completely without leaving a single trace behind it. Dr. Wright is also emphatic on that point. In the Introduction to his *Synopsis* he says: "If two such documents not merely existed but were so widely circulated that three Evangelists working in different churches possessed a copy of the first, and two—or as some say three—of the second, it is impossible that these pristine documents should have so completely perished that there is no mention of them in the Church Fathers."

As we are, for the moment, in search of a Gospel, or Gospels, that may be earlier than those we now possess, we are of course bound to examine this argument. Dr. Wright and Dr. Bartlet, and those

who agree with them, say there are no such Gospels, never were any such, for it is impossible in their view that they could have so utterly perished as seems to have been the case. This is one of the favourite arguments against the documentary theory, but is it a sufficient ground for disbelief in the existence of documents earlier than our present Gospels? The answer must undoubtedly be no. It presumes to know what these documents were like, and one feels that the presupposition underlying the argument is that they were such Gospels as those familiar to us in the New Testament. But it is doubtful if anyone would maintain Q was such a complete and perfect work as even the smallest of these. There is also another assumption here which we are unable to accept, viz. that these "pristine documents" have completely perished. There is no reason to suppose anything of the kind. The fact is, the exact opposite is more likely to be correct—they have been preserved in a large work, viz. the Synoptic Gospels. The principal contents of Q, or any other documents that may have been employed as a foundation for our present Gospels, would be worked up into these by the writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, according as each found the material suitable for his purpose, and practically all such material would be incorporated in the more formal works familiar to us. There would then be no need to preserve the original and less formal documents as a distinct collection. When one has incorporated the plan of a book one intends to write in the book itself, and used up the material collected in its production, there is no further necessity to retain carefully the plan or the sheaf of loose notes

we may have gathered together. These have served their purpose and are no longer of value. This seems to have been the case with these "pristine documents" underlying the Synoptic narrative; when their main contents, perhaps indeed all that they recorded, were incorporated in the Gospel story, there was no reason for their further preservation as separate documents. We might, indeed, even suggest that they would speedily be literally driven off the literary field by the fuller and more complete work of the Evangelists. Their disappearance, however, is an assurance to us that the information and truth they possessed were preserved in the manner indicated above, otherwise, if anything essential had been omitted, we think they would not have been entirely lost. In this view of the matter it is doubtful whether it is justifiable to speak of them as having "completely perished."

Dr. Wright has, we think, overladen his oral tradition theory too heavily with his hypothesis of a proto, deutro, and trito Mark. One wonders what difference there was between his supposed proto-Mark and Q! He also asserts that "St. Paul appears to know nothing of written Gospels." It is difficult to be certain one way or another on that point; still, it is surely a fair inference from 1 Cor. 13^{2}, "though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains," etc., that he may have known of Matt. 17^{20} or 21^{21}; or even Mark 9^{23} and Luke 17^{6}. Do not 1 Cor. 11^{23} and Acts 20^{35} suggest that St. Paul had a source of information which we cannot now trace? But as Salmon points out in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, when the oral tradition theory is pushed to its final position,

it presumes such a fixity of narrative in the material of the Gospel story as fairly amounts to a written document. He says: "If we are willing to believe that the memory of the first disciples, unspoiled by the habit of writing and stimulated by the surpassing interest of the subject, retained what was entrusted to it as tenaciously and as faithfully as a written record, then the hypothesis that a story has been preserved by memory stands on the same level as the hypothesis that it had been preserved on papyrus or parchment. . . . In either case we acknowledge that the tradition had assumed the fixity of a written record."

We must now turn for a moment to Dr. Bartlet's statement, mentioned above, to the effect that St. Luke's preface "gives no suggestion of any written Gospel, far less one of apostolic authorship." As against this we find Plummer in his commentary on this Gospel ("International Critical Series") stating: "This prologue contains all we really *know* respecting the composition of early narratives of the Life of Christ, and it is the test by which theories as to the origin of our Gospels must be judged. No hypothesis is likely to be right which does not harmonise with what is told us here. Moreover, it shows us that an inspired writer felt he was bound to use research and care in order to secure accuracy."

Writing on the word πολλοί, verse 1, he further affirms: "The context seems to imply that these, like Luke, were not eyewitnesses. That at once would exclude Matthew, whose Gospel Luke did not appear to have known. It is doubtful whether Mark is included in the πολλοί. The writers of extant apocryphal Gospels cannot be meant, for these are

all of later origin. Probably all the *documents* here alluded to were driven out of existence by the manifest superiority of our four canonical Gospels." Dr. Wright's paragraph V. (p. xviii) on St. Luke's preface does not, of course, agree with Plummer. There seems to be some confusion here. Who are the predecessors in writing whom St. Luke hopes to excel? Certainly this preface is a difficult problem to solve for those who believe that our present Gospels had only an oral foundation. A fair and reasonable interpretation would evidently require us to understand that St. Luke was aware of other written Gospels, which were even in circulation, and which he himself very probably used in the composition of his own.

We are therefore, by the circumstances of the case, and by the evidence forthcoming, forced to conclude that there must have been a written source or sources of our present Gospels. The questions we must now put to ourselves are, How many were there, and what were they like? And if these could be satisfactorily answered, the Synoptic problem would have largely disappeared from the realm of inquiry. St. Luke, clearly, is familiar with a number of written documents; whether these, or any of them, attained to the rank that we demand in a Gospel, it is of course impossible to say. It seems safe to affirm that there were several documents, at any rate, of a more important character than the others. It is, moreover, quite justifiable to suppose that there was, in the period when our present Gospels were produced, a good deal of written material available. We know as a matter of history that letter-writing was a comparatively common custom in those days,

and that it was practised among the Jews who were scattered over the four quarters of the world. It is reasonable to believe that those who were abroad kept in touch with their friends in Jerusalem, or in other parts of Palestine. When St. Paul was explaining his case to his Jewish brethren at Rome, they answered: "We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee" (Acts 28^{21}). May this not point to a practice that was somewhat common? To write letters on matters of importance we know, from St. Paul's Epistles, was quite usual. Is it conceivable, then, that Jesus of Nazareth should have lived such a life as the Gospels reveal, and yet nobody would think of writing to a friend at a distance, telling something of the wonderful occurrences? Would there be no letters passing from Galilee to Jerusalem while He was actively engaged in His labours in the former place? The narrative itself reveals that communication was carried on between the rulers at Jerusalem and their agents in the provinces respecting the work of Jesus. Is it likely this was all verbal? When He and His disciples left their native quarters, is it to be supposed that they would be cut off from all communications until they had returned again, or that they were absolutely confined to messages by word of mouth? It would be very unusual if that had been the case. The probabilities appear to point all the other way, and it certainly seems likely that written communications respecting Jesus and His work would be accumulating even during His lifetime. We cannot now, of course, prove that such was the case; we can only point out its

probability. These letters, in the majority of cases, would be passing among friends, and some of them might possibly be available when the earliest Gospels were being compiled; and so through this source some of the very stories recorded in the Synoptics may have been obtained, and in this view they would practically be a record of passing events. Our point is, that written communications regarding Jesus and His work were extremely likely to have taken place, and it was not at all probable that these immediately perished. Increasingly as the life of Jesus got to be understood, and still more particularly after His death and resurrection, we may be sure every item of information would be sought after most carefully, and treasured up as something of great value. This itself would facilitate the formation of larger and more connected collections of the sayings and doings of Jesus, but at what point in this process the documents upon which our Gospels rest received fixed form is not easy to determine.

It must appear evident from what has been already stated that the documentary theory not only accounts most satisfactorily for the peculiar problem that our first three Gospels present, but that it is strongly reinforced by the probabilities which a consideration of the historical circumstances suggest; it is now necessary that we should, if possible, get into more direct contact with the source from which some of the material in our Gospels was taken; that is to say, that we should endeavour to discover what Q really is. It has been already remarked that it appears to be rather an elusive document, and faith in its existence has been shaken possibly by this very fact. It is doubtful whether there is absolute

agreement among scholars as to the proper contents of Q.

(*a*) This document is considered by some to contain a collection of the "sayings of Jesus" only. It is doubtful, however, if that view is maintained so rigorously in recent years as it was formerly.

(*b*) Salmon in *The Human Element in the Gospel* devotes, necessarily, some attention to this subject, and we cannot do better, perhaps, than give the following quotations as reflecting his mind on this point:

"The verbal coincidences between the accounts given by St. Matthew and by St. Luke, both of the Baptist's teaching and of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, leave no room for doubt that these two Evangelists have used a common authority, which I here provisionally call Q" (p. 33).

Again, "I find it convenient then, if I use the letter P to denote the common authority used in sections which all three Synoptists have in common, to use the letter Q to denote the common authority of the sections common to Matthew and Luke" (p. 24).

On p. 41 he discusses the question, Was Q used by St. Mark as well as St. Matthew and St. Luke? He answers in the following terms:—

"In favour of the affirmative answer is the verbal agreement between St. Mark and Q, not only in the verse now under consideration (Mark 1^3), but in other verses in the section concerning the Baptist. If we hold that St. Matthew used Q, we cannot reasonably deny that St. Mark drew from Q his description of John's food and raiment."

We shall return later to the question whether or

not St. Mark uses Q, but it will be enough to observe here that Dr. Salmon does not lay very great stress upon his system of notation. These quotations, however, as well as references on pp. 57 and 58, make it evident that he supposed Q to contain narrative as well as the sayings of Jesus.

(*c*) Probably Harnack and Stanton give us the best idea of what may have been the contents of Q, and in a general way we may say it is their opinion that it was largely a collection of the sayings of Jesus, with only sufficient narrative material to give these sayings a proper setting. It is not necessary here to reproduce the list of passages that these two eminent scholars agree upon as representing this original document; we are only concerned with its general character. It is, however, obvious that at this distant date no one can affirm positively and exactly what its precise contents were. We hope it is clear that it had some substantial existence, and that it is not the creation of modern scholars begotten out of the difficulties incident to the Synoptic problem. We have seen above that there is strong presumption, amounting almost to certainty, that our Gospels rely for at least some of their material upon sources earlier than themselves; and even if these sources were oral, Q will still be a necessary symbol to represent them.

(*d*) Fresh light has recently been thrown upon this matter by the suggestion that Q is very probably the outcome, if not the very framework, of the "manual for preaching" that in all likelihood the early disciples and Evangelists employed. When they were sent forth to preach, it is believed there must have been some instruction given to them

concerning the subject-matter of their preaching. It is, of course, extremely improbable that they were occupied entirely with passages from the Old Testament Scriptures. There was no lack of such teaching among the Jews. Besides, as we know from the Gospels themselves, much of the Old Testament writings required a fresh interpretation. Jesus shows us this in the Sermon on the Mount. It is hardly supposable, then, that He would allow His preachers, who found it so difficult to understand these Scriptures themselves, to explain and interpret them to others without any assistance. On the other side, it is just as probable that they neither felt competent, nor had they the desire, to enter upon this evangelistic work without adequate instruction. They must have realised, as they listened to Jesus, that a new and more perfect Light had come into the world. Like many others, they would marvel as He unfolded views and thoughts out of the law and the prophets which had remained hitherto in complete obscurity. Perhaps some of the most ardent, among whom we might expect Peter, would note down the points of the new teaching. Many of the more striking utterances of Jesus could for a time be retained in the memory, but as these must have been increasing daily as He engaged more and more actively in the work of His ministry, the necessity for recording such utterances became pressing. In this connection, and in support of the supposition that such manuals for preachers were early in existence, it is interesting to study the contents of the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, wherein Jesus gives instructions to the disciples concerning the missionary labours upon which they

are about to enter. Preaching, quite evidently, was to be their supreme work. That is clear also from the example of Jesus. It is likewise evident from the apostolic commission recorded in the concluding verses of the first Gospel, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations," etc.; St. Mark 16^{15}, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Now, it is rather extraordinary to find that in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, Jesus occupies many verses in forewarning the disciples as to their experiences, and some of the probable results of their labours, but *only one verse* regarding the contents of their preaching—"And as ye go, preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It is, of course, possible in this chapter, as elsewhere, St. Matthew gathers together a quantity of material that may have been spoken under different circumstances and have had quite another purpose at the time of speaking, than that which he imports into it; but still the fact remains, one phrase only has been given in instructing the disciples concerning the chief part of the enterprise upon which they were now embarking. They were to take up precisely the message of John the Baptist, and of Jesus Himself—"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Admittedly, we have little exact information to go upon, but would this be likely to represent the real state of affairs between Jesus and His disciples at this period? There can hardly be a doubt of their having received special instructions for this work. It may have been all retained in the memory, certainly, but, then, some of it may have been reduced to writing. There are assuredly, therefore, many probabilities in favour of the existence of the

"preachers' manuals" which some scholars now believe came into practical use about this time. These "manuals" would contain some of the striking sayings of Jesus, mostly about the Kingdom, and more or less general information as to the line the disciples were to pursue in their preaching. Their existence would obviously preclude the necessity for any further detailed instructions regarding this particular work. These "preachers' manuals," or "notes," it is believed by certain scholars, were the very earliest form in which Q existed. It is clear in the circumstances there must have been several of them, and one sees no reason for believing that the contents of each of them were necessarily identical. The preachers would, no doubt, gradually add material to them from time to time; and this, we may suppose, would be of a didactic character rather than narrative; so that along this line of inquiry we find, what we have otherwise discovered already, that Q chiefly consisted of the sayings and teaching of Jesus.

CHAPTER II

PETRINE AND OTHER INFLUENCES DISCOVERABLE

We have endeavoured to obtain as reliable information as possible concerning Q, because we wish, if possible, to ascertain whether Mark is to any extent dependent upon this source in the composition of his Gospel, as Salmon seems to believe. It is manifest that Q and the Gospel of Mark are as unlike each other as it is possible for two such documents to be. They are in one respect the opposites each of the other. The Gospel is full of narrative; the document abounds in teaching. In another view they are the complements one of the other, for what is lacking in the Gospel is present in Q, and what is wanting in it is abundantly supplied in the Gospel. One wonders whether the distinctive character of these two early Christian documents was accidental? Is it not possible that the prominent features of the one may have had a very decided influence upon the mould into which the other was cast? A collection of the "sayings of Jesus" regarded as authoritative would in itself require a record of His doings, *et vice versa*. Assuming the existence of the "preachers' manuals," and that their development was such as is indicated above, it would be exceedingly helpful if we could approximately affix

a date when they were finally collected into one definite and complete volume, such as Q is generally believed to have been. There does not, meanwhile, appear to be sufficient data to enable that to be done with any degree of certainty. If it were possible, it might help us to determine whether the final collection of the distinctive sayings of Jesus was made much before the earliest date to which the Gospel of St. Mark might be assigned, and thus help us to ascertain whether he was likely to have used it to any considerable extent, if at all. The hypothesis under which we assume the existence of Q requires that it should be earlier than our Gospels in their present form. That is certainly so in regard to Matthew and Luke, but it is not so indisputable in reference to Mark. We find in a study of the contents of the first and third Gospels that the second seems to have been used as co-equal in authority with any other document, say Q, which was employed by these authors. From this we may infer that neither Mark nor Q possessed much advantage in age one over the other, for it is to be expected that Matthew and Luke would seek in the composition of their Gospels for the earliest as well as the most reliable authority. Here, various considerations point, we believe, to the likelihood that St. Mark was not much, if at all, indebted to Q. The character of his Gospel indicates a source richer and fuller in narrative material than it is supposed to have been. In a word, there was so little that he could obtain from it to help forward the work he had in hand, and he had such abundance of other reliable sources, that he appears to have been independent of Q. Salmon points out that in all probability Mark is

indebted to this document for the description in 1^6 of John's raiment; and in several places throughout his book he indicates a belief that the Evangelist is relying upon the document. Well, to take this one instance as a specimen, we find it easy to suggest another means whereby he may have obtained all the information he required concerning John. Is it not more likely that he would have obtained these details from Peter or Andrew, who, according to the first chapter of the fourth Gospel, appear to have been disciples of the Baptist? Besides, the figure of the Baptist was such, and his career so impressive, yet so brief, that his appearance must have been familiar even to the children of that period.

We have asserted that the Gospel by St. Mark in its character of a narrative of the life of Jesus points to a source richer and fuller than Q. We now come to inquire, What was that source? The question is answered in a word—St. Peter. It is now generally agreed that the basis for the narrative contained in St. Mark's Gospel rests upon the teaching, preaching, or particulars supplied by St. Peter to the Evangelist. There are many references to this in the Fathers. Dr. Morrison in his *Practical Commentary* traces the Petrine tradition right back from Jerome about the close of the fourth, to Papias at the close of the first or early in the second century. He mentions all the principal Fathers. It is not at all necessary to go over this list of nine names, for it is not to be assumed that they constitute nine different witnesses in favour of the tradition. Many of the later Fathers must have been only copying, or repeating in their own language, the story as they had found it recorded by the earlier. In view of the fact that

the Petrine relationship to this Gospel is so generally accepted, it will be enough for our purpose if we only mention the testimony of the earlier writers.

(1) Irenæus, whose date is given by Souter in the Sigla of his Greek Testament as second century, is one of those whose statements are of considerable importance, seeing that he lays claim to have been a disciple of Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John. In the third book of his *Treatise Against Heresies* he says: "After the Apostles were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, and fully furnished for the work of universal evangelisation, they 'went out' to the ends of the earth, preaching the Gospel. Matthew went eastward to those of the Hebrew descent, and preached to them in their own tongue, in which language he also published a writing of the Gospel; while Peter and Paul went westward and preached and founded the Church in Rome. But after the departure of these, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, even he, delivered to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter." A question which has hardly been satisfactorily solved even yet might be raised as to the proper interpretation of this quotation. It is not necessary, however, for our purpose to enter into that. The conclusion is quite certain, viz. that the Gospel of Mark was in the time of Irenæus associated with the preaching of St. Peter.

(2) The testimony of Justin Martyr is doubtful, and of no great value in this particular connection. He seems to speak of the "Memoirs of Peter" ("his memoirs"), and so far he contributes confirmation to the tradition.

(3) More attention may, perhaps, be bestowed upon the statement of Papias, who flourished, as already remarked, about the close of the first or beginning of the second century. Irenæus says he was the companion of Polycarp, who was in turn a disciple of John the Apostle. It is reasonable to expect that he would be familiar with the broad facts current in the Christian society of his day. He seems to have been diligent in gathering together as large a quantity of material as possible; many, however, doubt whether he was a very discriminating judge of its quality. Eusebius has preserved in his history what Papias recorded from the lips of John the Presbyter concerning the Evangelist Mark. This would have much greater weight, possibly, if we knew who John the Presbyter was; but we are unable definitely to trace him outside Papias' statements. "The Presbyter said this: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately whatever he recorded. He did not, however, present in regular order the things that were either spoken or done by Christ; for he had not been a personal auditor or follower of the Lord. But afterwards, as I said, he attached himself to Peter, who gave instructions according to the necessities of his hearers, but not in the way of making an orderly arrangement of the Lord's words, so that Mark committed no error in thus writing such details of things as he recorded; for he made conscience of one thing, not to omit on the one hand, and not to misrepresent on the other, any of the details which he heard" (Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* 3^{39}).

Now, there seems to be too much protesting here, and this can hardly be regarded as a cool and

unprovoked testimonial given to St. Mark. It savours rather more of the nature of an apologia, and possibly if we knew all the circumstances we would understand why Papias speaks so strongly on the defensive, as he here manifestly does. Perhaps there may be discovered in his words a hint of the early disfavour with which the Gospel by St. Mark was regarded. However that may be, all that we need take from the passage is, that the writer of this Gospel was clearly considered, at this early date, to have been indebted to St. Peter for the principal part of his information.

This must suffice so far as the testimony of the Fathers is concerned; perhaps a few sentences will be acceptable and useful as giving the opinion of modern scholars on the point.

(4) Prof. Swete in the Introduction to *The Gospel According to St. Mark* examines in some detail the earlier of these quotations mentioned above, pointing out that there are really two lines of tradition connecting St. Peter and St. Mark, which though they "have much in common they are by no means identical, and probably depend on sources partly or wholly distinct." Still, it is quite apparent the connection of the Gospel with St. Peter cannot be shaken. He goes on to say: "The internal evidence does not amount to proof of Petrine origination. But it is entirely consistent with the tradition which represents St. Mark as specially indebted to St. Peter." His conclusion is: "On the whole, it seems safe to assume as a working theory of the origination of the Gospel that its main source is the teaching of Peter, which has supplied nearly the entire series of notes descriptive of the Galilean ministry, and has largely influenced the remainder of the book.

But allowance must probably be made, especially in the last six chapters, for the use of other authorities, some perhaps documentary, which had been familiar to the Evangelist before he left the Holy City."

(5) Morrison in his Introduction states respecting the internal evidence that the Gospel may supply upon this point: "There is certainly nothing in the contents or texture of St. Mark's Gospel which can decisively determine that it was drawn from the well-spring of St. Peter's discourses. But on the other hand there is nothing that is in the least degree at variance with the patristic tradition" (Introduction, paragraph VII. p. xxxiv). He then proceeds to a more or less detailed examination of certain of the contents, which leads him to the conclusion that these corroborate the patristic statements. His final judgment is in the following significant words: "In short, if we assume the patristic tradition regarding the Apostle's relationship to St. Mark, we find the contents and texture of the Gospel to be, without a jar on any point, in perfect accord with the idea" (Introduction, paragraph VII. p. xxxvii).

(6) Salmon in his *Introduction to the New Testament* is even more decided. He takes the first chapter of St. Mark as giving a detailed account of our Lord's doings on one day. Four disciples are mentioned as associated with Jesus at this time, and by a process of elimination he arrives at the probability that St. Peter would be the person most likely to remember these occurrences. This is corroborated by a study of the story of the Transfiguration: "For to whom else is it likely that we can owe our knowledge of the words he caught himself

saying as he was roused from his heavy sleep, though unable, when fully awake, to explain what he meant by them?" Salmon then goes on to affirm: "It seems to me, then, that we are quite entitled to substitute, for the phrase 'triple tradition,' 'Petrine tradition,' and to assert that a portion, if not the whole, of the matter common to the three Synoptics is based on what Peter was able to state of his recollections of our Lord's Galilean ministry." Again, "Thus we are led by internal evidence solely, to what Papias stated had been communicated to him as a tradition, viz. that Mark in his Gospel recorded things related by Peter; but we must add not Mark alone, but Luke and Matthew also—only we may readily grant that it is Mark who tells the stories with such graphic fulness of detail as to give us most nearly the very words of the eyewitness. To this Renan bears testimony. He says (p. xxxix): 'Mark is full of minute observations, which, without any doubt, come from an eyewitness. Nothing forbids us to think that this eyewitness, who evidently had followed Jesus, who had loved Him, and looked on Him very close at hand, and who had preserved a lively image of Him, was the Apostle Peter himself, as Papias would have us believe'" (Salmon, *Introduction to N.T.*, pp. 137, 138). It is quite possible that Dr. Salmon would not have subscribed fully to everything in the foregoing quotation in his later years, and it will be instructive to have his very latest opinions as given in *The Human Element in the Gospels* (pp. 21, 22): "Speaking for myself, I may say that I have found no reason to believe in anything that later writers have added to what Papias had stated; and that I do not believe that

St. Peter had any share in the composition of St. Mark's Gospel, or that he was in any way responsible for its contents. But I consider that critical study would lead us to believe that some of the Evangelist's statements were derived directly or indirectly from that Apostle; and, therefore, I would not hastily reject a tradition that there had been personal intercourse between them. What inclines me most to accept the statement of Papias, is the marked difference of style between the section of the Gospel which relates what happened before the calling of Peter and those which tell of what happened after it —the contrast between the meagreness of St. Mark's narrative in the one case and its fulness in the other. . . . The change, then, from an abridged to a detailed narrative takes place exactly when Peter comes into the story; and thus internal evidence harmonises with the very ancient tradition that the Evangelist had had personal intercourse with St. Peter."

(7) Prof. Menzies in his Introduction to *The Earliest Gospel* puts the statement of Papias in particular through a careful examination and comes to the following conclusion: "His story, therefore, is not to be taken as a complete account of the writing of the second Gospel, but only as a contribution, in the style of Early Church tradition, to our knowledge of that undertaking. We may be sure that Mark regarded his reminiscences of Peter's information as a most valuable part of the materials he was able to command, and that he either made notes of what Peter said at the time of hearing it, or set to work at once when the Apostle was removed to write it down. With this he worked up the other

sources he had collected, and so produced the work we know" (p. 51).

(8) The last evidence we shall consider in this connection is that which is furnished by the first Epistle of Peter. In chapter 5^{13} we have the following: "The (church that is) at Babylon, elected together with (you), saluteth you; and (so doth) Marcus my son" (A.V.). As there is a question of interpretation here, perhaps a literal translation will be useful: "She in Babylon, fellow-elect (elect with) saluteth you, also Marcus my son." Now, if this could be satisfactorily shown to refer to our Mark, the author of the Gospel, there would be in it a substantial support for the contention that the Evangelist was largely using, in his composition, material supplied to him by the Apostle. The first clause of the verse just quoted would further afford strong corroboration of the statement of some of the Fathers that the Gospel was written in Rome—that is, of course, assuming for the moment that Babylon means Rome. Writing on the words "Marcus my son," Alford in his *Greek Testament*, vol. iv. (3rd ed.), says: "Perhaps, and so most have thought, the well-known evangelist; perhaps the actual son of Peter bearing this name. The *υἱος* is understood spiritually or literally, according as one or other of the above views is taken." This is certainly a qualified position to take up and is not very helpful. There is in it, too, a suggestion that this Marcus may actually have been Peter's son. We do not know what ground Alford had for that. There is, of course, the use of the word *υἱος*, which he admits may have had a spiritual meaning. We have no trace elsewhere of an actual son of Peter,

and it would be strange to find such mentioned in this incidental manner. We are justified in assuming that the person spoken of in the Epistle must have been well known, and there is only one Mark who conforms to that requirement—that is, of course, the Evangelist. We know from Acts 12^{12} that Peter was a visitor at the house of the mother of John Mark. It is quite reasonable to believe that the Apostle and the Evangelist would have become acquainted there.

Prof. M'Giffert in *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* endeavours to establish that the first Epistle of Peter was written by Barnabas. He says, pp. 599 f., "That Barnabas should speak of him (Mark) as his son was very natural, but it is not likely that anyone else would do it save Paul himself." But we do not see why it would be natural for Barnabas to write, "Marcus my son." We are told very distinctly in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (4^{10}) that Mark was a "sister's son" of Barnabas. It is rather improbable, then, that Barnabas would call his nephew his son; and it can hardly be a spiritual relationship that is intended in this case, for practically when we encounter Barnabas in gospel history we meet Mark at the same time. It must also be kept in mind that the Evangelist had come into contact with Peter before we find him in the company of Barnabas.

We think it is a still less likely suggestion that Paul should call Mark "my son." Their earlier associations were unfortunate, and while they were reconciled in later life, and we find from the Epistle to the Colossians that Paul had formed a high opinion regarding Mark, there is nothing in their whole intercourse that would suggest the Apostle would speak of the Evangelist in the terms before us.

In fact the Epistle referred to is generally interpreted as indicating that Paul was afraid the Churches of the Lycon valley might not receive Mark very kindly because of his former desertion of the Apostle. If that be so, it is extremely improbable that Paul would ever use the phrase "Marcus my son."

Closely allied to this point is the interpretation of the earlier part of 1 Pet. 5^{13}, "She in Babylon, fellow-elect, saluteth you." If by Babylon, here, is intended Rome, as most scholars and indeed the early fathers agree, then we have in this reference strong corroboration of the belief generally accepted that the Gospel was written at Rome from material supplied by St. Peter, because 1 Pet. 5^{13} on this interpretation shows that the Apostle and Evangelist were together at Rome when this Epistle was written. Writing on this passage in his commentary already mentioned, Alford makes a suggestion which is both ingenious and interesting. After referring to certain points he says: "These considerations induce me to accede to the opinion of those who recognise here the ἀδελφη γύνη whom St. Peter περίηγεν (1 Cor. 9^{5})." We think this interpretation of the clause has been influenced by the presence of the feminine ἡ as well as by the nature of the immediate context, which seems to require that a distinct individual should be mentioned. It must not be forgotten, however, that Peter's wife is a rather unobtrusive person in the Gospel narrative, and if she is referred to in this verse, it is a rather singular epithet that is used to designate her. If Peter meant by ἡ ἐν βαβυλὼνι his wife, we are bound to infer that she was generally well known and prominent in the Christian community, which is not supported

by the available evidence. We believe it is quite a unique way of referring to a lady in the New Testament, if Dr. Alford's suggestion is accepted.

Menzies in the Introduction to *The Earliest Gospel* (pp. 43, 44) deals with this very point, and his conclusion may be ascertained from the following quotation: "The last mention of Mark in the New Testament connects him not with Paul but with Peter, and we are there reminded of that earlier part of his history when he was a member of the Jerusalem Church, and when the house he belonged to was a place of meeting for the brethren and the place to which Peter turned when he escaped from prison. In 1 Pet. 5^{13} we read, 'She (church or) diaspora at Babylon, elect along with you, greets you, and Mark my son.' If 1 Peter is a genuine work of the Apostle of that name, these words would show that Mark was closely connected with him at the time when it was written. If the Babylon spoken of is Rome, as most scholars hold, then Mark's connection with the capital of the empire indicated in 2 Tim. is also indicated here, and we have to think that he lived on at Rome, with Peter as his chief instead of Paul." It is true that Prof. Menzies goes on to throw some doubt upon the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. But this hardly shakes the firmness of the tradition that SS. Peter and Mark were closely related in their work at a certain period, and that the latter was dependent upon the former for a considerable quantity of the material found in the Gospel. It is interesting to observe that most of the reasons urged against the Petrine authorship in *The Earliest Gospel* are of a negative character, chiefly arguments from silence, which are generally

admitted to be unsafe. But do not the reference and the circumstances rather argue against Prof. Menzies? We know from other sources that Mark and Peter were closely associated in earlier life. We know also that the Evangelist and Paul were similarly associated; one or other of these two in all probability wrote the words "Mark, my son," in 1 Pet. 5^{13}. That it was not Paul is a fair inference from 2 Tim. 4^{11}, and besides, the word used by Paul in referring to a spiritual relationship was τέκνον; here in 1 Peter it is υἱος. Prof. Menzies also finds a difficulty in "connecting a work written in elegant and flowing Greek with an Apostle who, in addressing audiences, made use of an interpreter." But Mark was, according to tradition, his interpreter, and he was evidently with Peter when this Epistle was written. The flowing Greek may, therefore, be the Evangelist's, even though there are differences of style between it and the Gospel, if it could not be the Apostle's. The author of 1 Peter must have been an Apostle or an impostor, because he claims in chapter 5^{1} to have been "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." The Epistle does not look like the work of an impostor; and this claim to have been an eyewitness of the agony and crucifixion of Jesus was not one that would have been put forward by an early Christian unless it had been true. If it be genuine, who is more likely to have written the Epistle than Peter, whose name was so early associated with it?

It has been thought a necessary part of our inquiry to follow out the Petrine connection with the Gospel of Mark with some carefulness and fulness, because a good deal depends upon it when

we proceed to consider the question of the contents, in order to ascertain whether any other documents or sources can have been earlier than those upon which the Gospel depends. If the Petrine foundation for it has been established, then it is quite clear that the fundamentals found in St. Mark, in fact that the basis of the Gospel story, are as early as any other documents or sources can be, for in their ultimate origin they rest on the testimony of an eyewitness. We cannot say the records are earlier than such documents; whether we hold the oral or written theory nothing can carry us back further than apostolic authority. If, as a general condition, we have in St. Mark's Gospel the narrative as related mainly by St. Peter, then we have an adequate explanation of the autoptic touches found so prominently in it. Certainly it is possible that Q or some such document may have been reduced to writing, may have taken definite form as a book, before the Gospel with which we are concerned; but their contents could not have been earlier. There is a certain aspect in which the age of a book is not to be determined by the date of its publication, but by the age of the things which it records. So it is here. The age of this Gospel is not to be settled by the date in which it was generally acknowledged, or came into circulation in the Early Church. St. Peter might have been telling twenty or thirty years after the events, what he had seen, but he was telling of them as he had seen them; he was reproducing them as they occurred, as he had had a share in them. In the descriptions in this Gospel we have word-pictures of earlier incidents that the Apostle had actually seen taking place. In particular it is

intended to be, in some measure, a narrative of the life and history of Jesus; and he tells the story as he saw it unfolding before his eyes, while he was a disciple of the Lord. So far as the material, then, is concerned, and we take it that is the essential thing, nothing can have priority over that found in the Gospel. Speaking of it, Menzies affirms it is "the earliest and simplest picture to us of the ministry of Jesus" (p. 51).

It may be convenient at this point to refer to two recent contributions to the Synoptic problem which would not accord with what we have now stated regarding Mark's Gospel. The first of these contributions is found in the "Studies in Theology Series"—*Gospel Origins*, by Holdsworth (1913). The author seems to accept the idea of this Gospel being the earliest, and dependent to some extent upon St. Peter. But in regard to it he evolves a very interesting theory which is rather difficult to prove and equally difficult to criticise. His plan is to apply the oral tradition scheme, of Dr. Wright say, to documents. He appears to think there were three editions of Mark's Gospel in different places—one at Cæsarea, one at Alexandria, and the other at Rome. One of them was used by St. Luke, one by St. Matthew, and the remaining one became the basis of our present second Gospel. As we have hinted, absolute proof one way or another cannot, of course, be forthcoming; but the following observations suggest lines of criticism of this theory which it is not necessary to develop here. (1) Do not the objections urged against Dr. Wright's scheme apply with equal force against this, *i.e.* of course as far as they are applicable? (2) If it is seriously maintained

that there were three editions of this Gospel, we would like to know what relation they bore to each other. Were they editions as we now understand the word ? If so, the three practically resolve themselves into one original, and we are left where we were. If, on the other hand, they were considerably different, and Mr. Holdsworth dwells upon that point, believing he can even, because of their differences, point out which was written at Alexandria, which at Cæsarea, etc., then do they not amount to three separate Gospels ? (3) It is strange there is no mention or trace of these three editions by any of the Fathers. One would have expected a knowledge of their existence to have been betrayed, but no proofs of any kind are forthcoming. (4) The theory is interesting, but meanwhile lacks evidence in support of it.

In the autumn of 1920 there appeared a book with the arresting title, *The Solution of the Synoptic Problem*, by Mr. Robinson Smith (Watts & Co., London). Considering the title of the book and the widespread interest in the subject, it is to be regretted that more definite and helpful results have not followed its appearance. Yet if it had satisfactorily accomplished what its author proposed in the title, the Christian would have been for ever indebted to him. There is ample ground for criticism, but that is not the object we have before us in this thesis. There are statements which we think are decidedly biased, and perhaps even some contradictions may be found. We are, however, only concerned with what particularly relates to the second Gospel. It is but just to say that the author is more merciful to it than to the others, his

book being largely an attack upon the integrity of St. Luke. In the *Argumenta*, p. vi, para. 16, the problem is stated thus: "The Synoptic problem, viz. the relation between Mark, Matthew, and Luke, especially the relation between their parallelisms, is solved by showing conclusively, by five lines of evidence converging on one point, that Luke followed on after Matthew and used him as a source, even as Matthew followed on after Mark and used him as a source" (dealt with pp. 9–17). This simple plan has, however, very interesting results: "There is therefore no reason for a Q or hypothetical source of the matter common to Matthew and Luke. The double tradition thus falls to the ground, as does an earlier Mark, the so-called Urmarcus. These false scents would never have been followed up if scholarship had kept to its task of never stating what it could not prove." The evolution of the Gospels, Mr. Smith appears to believe, is as plain and simple as anyone could desire: "Matthew wrote knowing of Mark, John wrote knowing of Mark and Matthew, and Luke wrote knowing all three" (p. 1). "These four short biographies (the Gospels) were written, the first within eighty years, the last within one hundred and twenty years of the death of Jesus Christ" (p. 2). The only support of this is the following, relegated to a note: "Mark is almost certainly quoted in Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, of which the date is not later than A.D. 110. Mark is later than *Biblical Antiquities* (falsely ascribed to Philo), the date of which is A.D. 70. Mark is also later than 1 Corinthians, which is also later than *Biblical Antiquities*. Mark is probably later than 4 Ezra

(cap. 4), which as part of the Salathiel vision (cap. 3–10) is a term of years, perhaps thirty later than the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. These facts would agree with Mark being later than Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, A.D. 75–79." The dates of the various Gospels are as follows: Mark, A.D. 105–110; Matthew, *c.* A.D. 120; John, *c.* A.D. 140; Luke, *c.* A.D. 145.

But Mr. Robinson Smith in the end seems to incline towards the very generally accepted position, for if with one hand he takes our old familiar Q from us, he with the other gives us something that serves the same purpose in *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*. We must give his own words in this connection: "Where, then, as in the New Testament writings, there is so much that is false as statement and feeble as argument, one is tempted to think that they reflect nothing that was true. It is, indeed, the very existence of Christ that is challenged to-day, as it was challenged by the Doketists within a hundred years of His reputed death. One thing alone can save us from this extreme conclusion, and that is the discovery of a document which is older than the Gospels, older than the Epistles, and which shall bear on the face of it evidence of greater truth. Such a document I believe to be *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*" (p. 64). It is necessary to remember the date given by Mr. Robinson Smith to this *Gospel of the Hebrews* is A.D. 80–90, and we are told without a blush it is earlier than the Epistles, say Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, or Galatians. We are afraid his views on this aspect of the problem will not receive general acceptance. We crave pardon for one more quotation illustrative of this author's method of solving

the Synoptic problem; it is stated in distinct terms (p. 6) as follows: "The first step is the frank recognition that when two writers use the same words in describing the same event, one writer is copying the other. This is the first step in constructive criticism put in the baldest terms." But further, "Preciseness of language need not be insisted on" (p. 7). Now it is extremely doubtful if anyone would regard this method as reliable or scientific. The situation is not quite so simple. It is obvious that all the alternatives are not exhausted by "this first step in constructive criticism." It is just as probable that the two writers in the case supposed may have been both using a common original document, copies of which they each possessed. This is enough to show that this first step may not at all lead the critic where he wants to go, supposing he wishes to find out the whole truth. Mr. Smith's theory, moreover, might account for the agreements in the Gospels if there was nothing else against it, but it will not account for the differences. We know, of course, that one Evangelist used the works of another when it suited his purpose to do so, but that one writer simply sat down and recklessly incorporated, altered, rejected, and even falsified the works of his predecessors we do not admit; yet this seems to be the line along which Mr. Robinson Smith finds the "solution of the Synoptic problem" to lie. In his attack upon the integrity of St. Luke's Gospel he states with evident approval the following: "In the English translation of his *The Acts of the Apostles*, Harnack devoted twenty-eight pages to a list of his inaccuracies and discrepancies in that book alone." Well, it is good to be in good company,

and we, too, at this point must refer to the most recent position of that great scholar on this whole subject of the Synoptic Gospels.

In the *Expositor* for November 1920 there will be found an article from the pen of Dr. Stalker of Aberdeen which is of first-class importance, and the subject with which it deals may have far-reaching effects. The very title is significant: "A Revolution in New Testament Criticism." This article is to some extent a review of the three most recent books of Prof. Harnack—*Luke the Physician*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels*. The significance of the position taken up by Harnack in these books is emphasised by the fact that formerly he rejected practically all those points he now accepts, "that he tested every possible alternative; and he came to his conclusions only slowly and with reluctance." The conclusions he arrives at are briefly the following: (*a*) The Book of the Acts has a marvellous unity; (*b*) that it was written by St. Luke; (*c*) that "it is united with the Gospel"; (*d*) that it was "most probably" written about the year A.D. 62; (*e*) that St. Luke's Gospel must be "assigned to the year 60 at latest" and "St. Mark's remitted to the sixth decade." It is to be hoped these latest efforts of Prof. Harnack will obtain the same appreciation from Mr. Robinson Smith that his earlier appear to have received. Yet we must ask, Where is his theory of Synoptic dependence upon *The Gospel According to the Hebrews* now? These latest dates, as given in Prof. Harnack's work already mentioned, must prove rather inconvenient for such a critic as Mr. Robinson Smith. We need only emphasise

that his date for St. Mark's Gospel is A.D. 105–10, while the Professor put it in the sixth decade. No doubt the final word on this point has not yet been written, but in exhausting our references to this volume which appeared in the autumn of 1920, we desire to quote once more this sentence: "These false scents could never have been followed up if scholarship had kept to its task of never stating what it could not prove."

Probably nothing could be truer than the statement of Menzies in the section of his Introduction dealing with "Motives of the Formation of the Gospel Tradition," where he says: "To understand any literary work it is necessary first of all to have some acquaintance with the age which produced it"; then follows a very interesting examination of the subject just mentioned. There is no doubt the position taken up seems quite reasonable and has much to commend it, but one wonders whether Prof. Menzies has not overlooked some of the facts. He very rightly points out the lack of details in the Epistles and even the Acts concerning the earthly life of Jesus. But that is surely to be expected. Most of the Epistles were written for a special purpose, to a particular Church, or company of Christians. We need not, therefore, be disappointed that details as to the person and work of Jesus are lacking in such documents. The Acts was written professedly as a continuance of a former work in which ample particulars are given on the very points mentioned by Menzies. No one would expect that these should be repeated in the second volume. Nor can we overlook the fact that the Epistles and Acts were written to persons who were

presumably familiar with the details of the earthly life of Jesus. "When Paul first preached to the Galatians, what did he tell them about Christ? Not about the miracles, nor about His teaching, but about His death" (p. 7). Well, that may be so, so far as the information supplied by the Epistle is concerned. We must, however, endeavour to visualise the situation as it actually existed. Supposing Paul had begun to preach about the death of Christ to these Galatians, it is evident that they must have asked immediately, "Who is Christ? What has His death to do with us? Have you seen Him? Where did He live? Where was He crucified?" And almost any one such question would lead to the necessity for giving personal details concerning the earthly life of Jesus. It appears as if Prof. Menzies had written this part of the Introduction with the Christian community alone in view, yet these were familiar with many of the details concerning the history of Jesus, and so did not require to have them told again, even in an epistle. But we cannot be content to keep the conditions of the Christians only before our minds when attempting to obtain a comprehensive and adequate conception of the age which produced the Gospel. We know there was a great spirit of inquiry abroad at this period. We cannot, therefore, believe that the people generally would not eagerly ask questions as to the person of Jesus who, it was alleged, was raised from the dead.

The religious state of the age which produced the Gospels may find a somewhat appropriate parallel in the mission field of to-day. When a missionary proceeds to preach the Gospel to those who are quite

unfamiliar with religious and Christian truth, he surely must explain the leading facts in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It hardly appears possible to dissociate the narrative of the life of Jesus from the doctrine respecting "faith in the Risen Lord, now with God." Wherever the preachers of the Gospel went, when they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, as the Saviour of men, surely the necessities of the situation would require them to explain who Jesus was, and to convey as distinct an impression of His life and work as it was possible for them to do. It will also be obvious that this required to be done with a good deal of accuracy, as there were those interested who were undoubtedly ready and capable of exposing any errors or falsehoods. It is clear, too, that the one part of this history of Jesus depended upon the other, and the teaching of the one implied the necessity for communicating the other likewise. This is manifestly understood and accepted by Prof. Curtis in his *History of Creeds and Confessions*, where he writes: "The preachers of Jesus had to tell the story of His life in support of their contention that hope and prophecy found fulfilment in Him as Christ. Their recollection of His career had to be set alongside their estimate of His person. Accordingly in the apostolic age confession fluctuated between three main forms: (1) acceptance of Him as Christ, or Lord, or Son of God; (2) acceptance of an outline of the main facts of tradition about His home and life; and (3) acceptance of the threefold Divine self-revelation in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (p. 37). So that we may be safe in assuming that wherever the earliest preachers of the Gospel went to break up new ground, whether in

Galilee or Judæa, Rome or Galatia, inevitably in preaching Christ as crucified, they must have given the main facts in the human life of Jesus. This is a fair and reasonable inference from 2 Cor. 5^{16}: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." It would not, therefore, be far from the mark to say that the Gospels were in their incipient stage when these preachers were giving such details, some of which must have fallen within their own experience and observation.

May it not have been possible that the very emphasis laid upon the "heavenly figure" of the Christ, and the promulgation of the advanced Christology we find in most of the Epistles, led to the necessity, at least in a measure, for the writing of a Gospel that would give some particulars of the human life of Jesus of Nazareth and of His labours in Galilee? For instance, could the people of Rome be quite content with the Epistle written to them by St. Paul? Would it have satisfied fully the requirements of the situation? There is no narrative matter concerning Jesus in this Epistle, but there is a very advanced Christology, while there is perhaps just as advanced Christology in St. Mark, but abundance of narrative material added. We may say there is much abstract and abstruse doctrine in the one, but scarcely any doctrine at all in the other. As St. Mark's Gospel has been associated with Rome in early Christian tradition, is it possible that the character of these two books, in view of the circumstances, was accidental? The Roman Christians must have been most deeply impressed with the profound teaching of the

Epistle, and it certainly gave them enlightenment in several directions as to Christ's work and relation to such matters as justification and righteousness, or the relation of the law to the Christian system. But it told them nothing about the *Man*; and they would have been less than mortal if they had not desired to know about Him; and it is not at all improbable that St. Mark's Gospel was written to supply this felt need. As the Epistles with their somewhat advanced teaching began to be read, and as the work of the Church was extended and new territories were being entered into, as the older generation of believers was passing away and a new generation arising, the demand became more and more urgent that a record should be drawn up as carefully as possible, so that people might be instructed in the earthly history of the risen and exalted Saviour. At first, we imagine, it was not so much that the Christians themselves needed gospels; rather it was that they found them necessary for the use of others who were not so well versed in the Christian tradition. They also required them, as has been suggested already, as complements to the other Christian writings that were now appearing.

It is a matter of discussion also whether these Gospels were so late as Prof. Menzies, following Westcott, evidently thinks. He suggests that the late appearing of the Gospels was largely due to the possibility "that in the first Christian age a full account of the earthly life of the Saviour was not required" (p. 6). We have already answered that and indicated its improbability; but in developing his argument Menzies says (p. 6): "The Epistles were written, the journal in Acts and perhaps other

parts of that work were written, very early in the history of the Church." Is there not, however, involved in this statement that which contradicts the position he wishes to establish and explain, viz. the lateness of the Gospels? Does not the early appearance of the Acts carry with it the earlier appearance of the third Gospel, and does not this in turn involve the still earlier appearance of St. Mark? Perhaps Prof. Menzies in this statement designedly discriminates between the journal in Acts and the remainder of that book, and while admitting the early appearance of the former, would deny it in the case of the latter. Dr. Salmon in his *Introduction to the New Testament* devotes a considerable part of chapter xviii. to prove that the Book of Acts is a unity as far as authorship is concerned. It will be sufficient to quote the following sentence: "An independent proof of the unity of authorship is obtained from a study of the language" (p. 303). Page says: "The Acts exhibit throughout an identity of language and style." But the most recent and most important contribution to the subject of the date of the Gospels is that which has already been referred to, viz. Dr. Stalker's review in the *Expositor* for November 1920 of the three recent books of Harnack. We may only add to what has already been stated, that the position now assumed by this great German scholar gives weighty confirmation to the point we have endeavoured to establish above, viz. that along with doctrinal teaching concerning the person and work of Jesus, historical teaching was also given. It shows, likewise, that the early Christians did not lack interest in the facts and details of the career of Jesus.

If Harnack's position is to be accepted, it follows that the writers of the Synoptics were much nearer the events in time than has hitherto been supposed by many scholars, and that there was not the same likelihood of environment, preconception, or reflection producing influences and tendencies that would prejudicially affect the accuracy of the narratives they were recording. If Mark was written between A.D. 50–60, there must have been many reliable persons from whom the Evangelist could have obtained any requisite particulars relative to the life of Jesus. And one certainly feels that the nearer one gets to the time of our Lord, the stream of tradition concerning Him is the more likely to be pure and trustworthy. But, again, if Harnack's position be accepted, does it not follow that we must put another interpretation upon the words of Irenæus from that which is now pretty generally received? "But after the departure of these (Peter and Paul), Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, even he, delivered to us in writing the things that were preached by Peter." Many authorities believe the words "after the departure of these" refer to the death of Peter and Paul, which may be placed, according to tradition, somewhere about A.D. 64. Indeed, if Harnack's recent views be adopted, it seems inevitable that, as a consequence, we must re-examine our theory as to the original sources underlying the Gospels, and St. Mark's in particular. For if it be brought back to the early date already mentioned, there appears little enough time for any other important sources that could have influenced it to have sprung into existence. And herein we find corroboration for the view already

expressed, that St. Mark was mainly, if not entirely, dependent upon St. Peter in the composition of his Gospel for such information as he could not gather himself. The further interesting question may now have to be faced by scholars as to whether there was sufficient time for Q to have assumed distinctive shape and authority within such a short period as twenty-five years or so after the crucifixion, even supposing St. Mark to have used it. Possibly the way of escape may be found in a modification of our ideas in regard to the contents of Q, and adopting more stringently the belief that it was more strictly a collection of the sayings of Jesus than some scholars are now disposed to accept. In short, that it was not essentially different in its contents from the "Preachers' Manuals" already mentioned, and could, therefore, have been of little service to St. Mark in the composition of his Gospel.

In endeavouring to form an opinion of the circumstances that contributed to the rise of gospel literature, we must not overlook the influence of the Jewish writings, particularly those of the Old Testament. We know that it was receiving a great deal of attention about the beginning of the Christian era, and it need hardly be pointed out that much information regarding the Messiah was to be obtained from it. These writings must, therefore, have had some considerable influence in shaping the character of the Gospels. As the writers of the latter would be familiar with the Old Testament teaching from their earliest days, there could be nothing more natural than that they would, to some extent at any rate, mould their books upon these earlier religious writings, regarded by them as so

sacred. As a matter of fact, and just as we would expect, both Mark and John commence their Gospels in imitation of Genesis; while Matthew seems to have set himself the task of producing a volume the chief object of which was to show that Jesus, in His life and work, was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

This being so, we must, as a consequence, be prepared for Jewish presuppositions and even prejudices in the Gospels, and when studying their story of the life of Jesus we ought always to take that into account. Fortunately St. Mark's Gospel is fairly free from this influence. Still, we must remember that even he gives us a picture from a Jewish standpoint, which to some extent may have been affected consciously or unconsciously by his early upbringing and environment.

Probably the most necessary thing in any study pertaining to the life of Jesus is sympathy. It is, of course, good to be as unbiassed as possible. But it also seems needful, if we are to arrive at a fair and clear idea of Christ as He is presented to us in any of the Gospels, that we should endeavour to enter as fully and vividly as we can into the experiences of those who either wrote or told the story, and who were so deeply influenced and impressed by the personality of our Lord. If we are to give a faithful portrait, that is to say, of the Christ as painted, for instance, by St. Mark, we must try to think ourselves into the positions and conditions indicated by the Gospel, and this to be rightly done requires the sympathetic spirit as well as the discerning mind. Nor can we fail to be deeply influenced by the broad lines of the story

as it is told by each of the Synoptists in his own way. Probably there is no sublimer work upon earth than this narrative which tells of how a Man became a God. We must realise that the task that these historians really set before them was to show how One who at first proclaimed Himself as a Son of Man, had in the end Divine attributes ascribed to Him. How they accomplish that extraordinary, yea, that unique, task is just by telling simply the story of the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed one of them is content with much less than that, for he only deals with the period of the public ministry of our Lord; indicating thereby that he is satisfied this will be enough for his purpose. Details of birth or of ancestry, of domestic relationships or of early training, have scarcely any interest for him. He is concerned with the work of Jesus. He is absorbed in the contemplation of a power in operation which in the end he can only regard as Divine.

Nor must we fail to appreciate the very formidable task that Jesus Himself had taken in hand. Surely no story ever told reveals such a weighty undertaking. That a Man of humble origin, of obscure birth, possessing no earthly advantage but rather handicapped in many ways, should set before Him as a goal the living of such a life as should, first of all, lead His companions to recognise that He was a superman, and beyond that, that He was indeed the Son of the Living God! Can there be anything more impressive than to realise that the Son of Mary, who was not the Son of Joseph, was so to live and act that men should acknowledge Him to be the Son of the Blessed? Can there be any parallel

to the scheme which Jesus set before Him as to the revelation of the Father—that His life was to be a setting forth of the life of God? Greek mythology supplies us with instances of gods coming down from heaven to dwell among men, but there is a sublimer conception in the story of Jesus, for in it we may behold a Man coming from heaven, who returns to it as God. And the transformation is effected in three short years of public work—three years of living such a life that men are in the end led to the conclusion that "Verily this was the Son of God." The Gospels show us the process by which this great change in the thoughts of the disciples and others concerning Jesus of Nazareth took place.

We have now reached the conclusion of such introductory matter as seemed necessary before entering upon the main theme—"The Christology of the Earliest Gospel." Of the Gospels familiar to us there can hardly be any doubt that St. Mark's is the earliest. The only question is, whether or not he was to any considerable extent dependent upon Q; and we think not, both from the generally accepted nature of Q as well as from the nature of the Gospel. In any case, the Petrine tradition appears to be reliable, and this would provide the Evangelist with an amply trustworthy and sufficient source for his abundant narrative material. We are, therefore, in a position to proceed, being assured that in St. Mark's Gospel we are drinking from the well-springs of apostolic revelation, and through Peter brought in it to earliest, closest, and oftentimes most real touch with Jesus Himself.

CHAPTER III

EARLIEST PORTRAIT OF THE MAN-JESUS

In taking up such a volume as the Gospel according to St. Mark for close and careful study, one feels at once the need of divisions. While it is true the Gospel is the shortest of all four, still every student of these "memoirs" has found the need for trying to break them up into suitable parts. This is often helpful to a right understanding of the various material dealt with in the Gospel. Swete says: "Attempts were made at an early time to break up the Gospels into sections corresponding more or less nearly to the nature of the contents" (p. 1). This would form a very obvious and usually convenient system of division, but it does not reveal the existence of any very definite plan in the particular Gospel examined. There can be little doubt that there was such a plan in the mind of the writer. The author quoted just now says further: "Even a hasty examination will show that the book (*i.e.* Mark) deals with two great themes—the ministry in Galilee (1^{14}–9^{5}) and the last week at Jerusalem (11^{1}–16^{8}), and that these sections are connected by a comparatively brief survey of the period which intervened (10^{1-52}). The first fourteen verses of the Gospel are evidently introductory; the last twelve have the character of an appendix."

We shall just place these particulars in a table, giving with it the divisions of the Gospel as suggested by Zahn and Salmond.

	Swete.	Zahn.
1.	1^{1-14} Introductory.	1. 1^{1-14}.
2.	1^{14}–9^{50} Ministry in Galilee.	2. 1^{16-45}.
3.	10 Brief survey connecting 2 and 4.	3. 2^{1}–3^{6}.
4.	11^{1}–16^{8} Last week at Jerusalem.	4. 3^{7}–6^{13}.
5.	16^{9-20} Appendix.	5. 6^{14}–10^{52}.
		6. 11^{1}–16^{8}.
		7. — ? Appendix.

Salmond—Geographical Divisions.

1. 1^{1-14}.
2. 1^{14}–7^{23}.
3. 7^{24}–9^{50}.
4. 10^{1-31}.
5. 10^{32}–15^{47}.

It will be observed that Zahn is more detailed in his sections than the other two. Salmond's is confessedly on a geographical basis, and Swete's seems to be drawn up from an historical point of view. It is but a bare summary of the main facts of the story, and certainly from that aspect is quite satisfactory. But we wish something more decided and suggestive in dealing with the distinctive Christological teaching of the Gospel. Is there any possible division which will mark some development of this particular theme in the Gospel? That is to say, is there a plan discernible in it that will help

us to divide the teaching concerning the person and office of Jesus in such a way as shall enable us to have clearer and distincter views concerning Him as a Man and as the Messiah? We must remember that we are looking at this whole matter through the eyes of others; so that our inquiry might rather be put thus: Was there anything in the experience of St. Peter, any incident or occurrence, that made such an impression on his memory as to establish a point around which many of his recollections would cluster? And the answer is in the affirmative, there is such an experience. Scholars have united in accepting the confession of St. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi as an epoch-making declaration, which essentially affected the attitude of the disciples to Jesus. We shall have to consider this confession later in more detail; let it be enough now to say that after it the disciples could never again view their Master as they had regarded Him before. Possibly they had begun to suspect that He was more than man; now they were assured of it; and we may be certain that their relationship to Him, and their conception of Him, gradually changed from that time onwards. It must be confessed that no division of the Gospel seems possible of being carried absolutely into all the details; inevitably they appear to overlap and impinge upon each other. Yet it might be found, from the purely Christological point of view, the following would be suggestive:—

1. 1^{1-14} Introductory.
2. 1^{14}–8^{33} Jesus as Man.
3. 8^{34}–16^{8} Jesus as Messiah.
4. 16^{8-20} Appendix.

The only merit this plan has, is that it emphasises and recognises the great fact of Peter's confession; and it gives scope for the idea of a progressive revelation of the Messianic claims of Jesus to develop.

As has been hinted at already, there is little revealed in the earliest Gospel as to the human life of Jesus. That is not what is chiefly before the mind of the writer. None of the Gospels supplies us with many details of the early life of our Lord; Mark gives none at all. As we have seen previously, there is nothing about His birth, His parentage, His home, or His kindred. Indeed it would appear as if these things that ordinarily absorb so much of human interest possessed no attraction for him, so eager is he to set forth Jesus as a Man of Power. There are human touches scattered here and there over the Gospel story, and, so far as St. Mark is concerned, we are left pretty much to ourselves to infer from these what sort of a man Jesus really was. On one occasion, comparatively a short time after He had entered upon His public work, His mother and brethren came seeking Him, and on the multitude intimating their presence to Him, "He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother" ($3^{32ff.}$). Now this passage rather appears to suggest that Jesus did not at this stage desire to recognise human ties, and that when He turned His back upon His home at Nazareth it was for ever. If that was so, He was probably, in acting thus, doing no more than many another teacher had done

before Him. Yet it seems likely that the proper inference to be taken from the incident is, that He now found it necessary to indicate that there were higher relationships than those suggested by even the most sacred earthly ties. We may be sure there was not the smallest thought in His mind of despising His home and friends, but that definitely He was emphasising in a very impressive manner the spiritual brotherhood He now desired to establish among men. The fourth Gospel shows us (19[26f.]) that even on the Cross earthly relationships and human ties were dear to Him.

Further, we have every reason to conclude from the general tone of our Gospel that Jesus was a Man of strong attractive powers, if we may not say of intense personal magnetism. This is seen, for instance, in the circumstance that when He called His disciples they immediately responded to that call, and remained His attached followers, although the conditions of their lives, sometimes, could not have been very attractive or pleasant. It is also deducible from the fact that the crowds so frequently and even persistently waited on His ministry. True, some of these were drawn to Him through the cures that He effected; but unless the physical conditions of Galilee and Judæa were much worse in those days than they are now, only a comparatively small number of people were thus helped by Him. Many must, therefore, have come to hear Him speak, to listen to the message He had to proclaim. Only this will fully explain the thousands that gathered round Him, and which were fed by Him, and definitely we are told that "the common people heard him gladly" (12[37]).

That He was a man of lovable disposition goes almost without saying; yet St. Mark allows us to infer that. We shall in this connection recall the intense attachment of St. Peter (13^{32}) and the courageous zeal of SS. James and John (10^{39}). He defends the disciples from the attacks of the Pharisees ($2^{24ff.}$), and His whole relation to them was one of exceeding tenderness and beauty. Ever He is the Kind Friend, thinking of their comfort: "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (6^{31}).

He was, further, a Man of broad sympathies and charitable actions: "And when He came out He saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (6^{34}). "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat" (6^{37}). Similarly we are told in 8^{2}, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat."

These various passages show us Jesus as One who was full of consideration for others, whether these were of His disciples or of the common multitude that came to hear Him. He might be hungry Himself—weary sometimes—but He was solicitous for the comfort of His friends. His mind, as we have seen above, was at times so filled with a sense of the importance of His spiritual mission as to make almost everything else appear rather insignificant; yet much of His earthly ministry was directed towards alleviating the physical sufferings and needs of men.

Nor must we overlook the exceeding friendliness

He displayed towards the outcast from Jewish religious society, and His generous treatment even of His opponents. Certainly there were times when He could be angry and stern, showing to a degree the qualities of an Old Testament prophet, as in the case of leprosy (1^{43}); but we have no doubt always there were circumstances to justify His indignation. And He certainly did show an uncompromising spirit to His opponents wherever principle and right were involved.

But when all that can be found in this Gospel regarding Jesus as a Man is before us, we are sure to discover that this is not an obtrusive thought in the work of St. Mark. Perhaps we are justified in saying that here He stands more alone, is more apart than in any of the other Gospels, not even excepting St. John's. In this we have Bethany, but no home there. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are not mentioned. Indeed, on one of the mornings of the last week at Bethany He comes to Jerusalem and is hungry—no food apparently having been forthcoming (11^{12}). Jesus stands in this Gospel more apart, because while He is a man, yet almost from the very first the disciples recognise Him as on a superior level to themselves. For many reasons He never could have a perfect friend upon earth. Friends needs must have common interests; similar views and purposes in life; a community of thought. With Jesus all such things seemed so different right from the first. His view of life could not be identical with that of the disciples; His line of conduct far exceeded their standard; His devotion to duty was utterly beyond their powers; His submission to the Divine Will incomparably more perfect than

they could offer. So that after all St. Mark is perhaps right in not delaying with the details of the earthly life of our Lord. He paints Him as a Man of unbounded energy and unlimited resources pressing on towards the attainment of His goal. Yet, certainly, there were times when even this wonderful Man craved for human sympathy, as when in the Garden of Gethsemane He beseeches His three disciples to watch ($14^{34ff.}$); or perhaps when He defends the woman who annointed His feet with spikenard, saying, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. . . . She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (14^{6-9}). It is important that we should have as clear a photograph of the Man-Jesus as possible, because it may be of immense value in helping us to understand aright His ministry as well as the influence He exercised upon His disciples. Professor Curtis has well remarked in *History of Creeds and Confessions* (p. 5): "Faith in Jesus Christ personally would naturally precede faith in His Messiahship." Unfortunately the materials furnished by St. Mark on this aspect of the subject are not very plentiful. That Jesus accomplished the work given Him to do shows best that the disciples and other followers must have had faith in Him as a Man. Perhaps the highest tribute to His perfect manhood will be found in Simon's words at Cæsarea Philippi: "Thou art the Christ."

In coming into direct and immediate contact

with the Gospel, our attention is at once arrested by its opening words: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This verse has received a good deal of consideration from those students who are interested in the Gospel. The reasons are obvious. (1) Such advanced Christology is not to be expected at the beginning of a work the primary object of which appears to be to manifest that Jesus was the Son of God—that is to say, this statement forestalls the whole Christological development to be found in the Gospel. (2) This style is unexpected in the case of Mark, who generally does not so anticipate. He is, for example, most careful in an exact chronological use of the names "Simon" and "Peter." (3) Christ is not a *name* used by St. Mark elsewhere; it is the designation of an office—*The Messiah*. This is a Pauline usage, and both Salmon and Menzies refer particularly to that fact; it is interesting as showing the influence of the Apostle on the Evangelist. Menzies observes in a note: "If accepted as part of the text, these words must be understood like all the terms in this verse in a Pauline sense. . . . In Paul, on the other hand, the Son of God is a heavenly figure (Rom. 1^4; Gal. 4^4), who was with God before He appeared in the world, and has now been exalted to still higher honours than he enjoyed before. In this verse the words must express the writer's own view of Christ's nature, and as he writes for Gentiles, only the latter metaphysical sense of the phrase can be thought of" (p. 57). "As applied to our Lord, it involves the great idea that he had in him a higher nature than Man's. He was of one nature with God." (4) The words "the Son of God" are omitted in one of our

most important MSS. (א), and in several others of lesser value, as well as by certain of the Fathers; there is, therefore, a critical problem here which we shall take in hand first. (*a*) Although these words are omitted in certain MSS., one of which is often of prime authority, we must set against that the fact that they are found in other MSS. quite as reliable, and we might say of co-equal critical weight, and probably a close scrutiny of the evidence would show the balance in favour of retention rather than rejection of the words in question. Modern scholars are somewhat divided in their opinions according as they are influenced by the ancient authorities. Morrison thinks the words "Son of God" "are genuine, although Sinaitic MSS. omits, other first-rate MSS. include." Salmon says: "I cannot feel any doubt they are a genuine part of the Evangelist's text." Swete suggests that "possibly the heading existed almost from the beginning in two forms, with and without *υἱοῦ Θεοῦ*." He puts them in brackets. His suggestion seems very unlikely. Westcott and Hort insert them in the margin, but "hold that neither reading can safely be rejected." Menzies believes they are more likely to have been added to the original text, and puts them in brackets. Souter includes, but appends a note giving readings, etc. Tischendorf omits, following א, as he usually does. It is quite clear the weight of scholarship is in favour of retaining these words, and it hardly seems a matter of vital importance whether that retention is in the margin, in brackets, or courageously in the body of the text. (*b*) There is little doubt that the advanced Christology in this verse has drawn attention to it; but this hardly seems a sufficient reason for

urging a rejection of the phrase "the Son of God," even if we keep strictly in view the chronological exactness of St. Mark. This verse may be regarded as a title to the Gospel, and as such may be expected to forecast teaching that was to be taken up in the book itself. It must not be forgotten that when St. Mark began to write his Gospel, his mind was fully made up as to who Jesus was. And although we believe there is a Christological development in the volume, yet all through the writer often betrays a belief in Jesus as the Christ—the Son of God. (*c*) We are asking too much from the Evangelist to expect absolute chronological accuracy in the progressive advancement of his teaching, seeing that all the facts were known to him before he wrote anything. (*d*) There is nothing gained by the rejection of the words, for we find the same advanced Christology in connection with the baptism a few verses farther down. (*e*) When we remember St. Mark's association with Paul, we expect some traces of Pauline use of phrases, etc. (*f*) There is no question about the retention of Χριστοῦ in the verse, yet this word presents the same kind of difficulty as υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. (*g*) Perhaps all that need be taken out of the verse so far as doctrine is concerned, is that the story which is about to be told is intended to lead to a belief that Jesus is the Christ—*the Son of God.* The title may be regarded as standing to the Gospel somewhat in the same relation as the text does to a sermon. It is the essence of all that is to follow. In such a sense we may accept the words, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," without having our theory as to the development of the Christology of the Gospel prejudicially affected in

any way. This is the title; what follows is the exposition of it. Still, we cannot disguise the fact that it is most impressive to find these words standing at the head, not of one Gospel only, but as the very spring, as it were, out of which the whole story of Jesus issued. Since Mark's is the earliest of all our known Gospels, this first verse may quite appropriately be regarded as the root, to change the metaphor, from which all the others have sprung. It is the one pregnant sentence out of which the whole Christological teaching of the Church has come; it is the very essence of the Gospel in its fullest sense. "Jesus"—the word implies the humanity of our Lord, indicates that He was a man, in many respects like other men, in physical essentials the same as ourselves, with "body, parts, and passions" that must both act and be acted upon. "Christ"—He is the great anointed of God, promised of the ages, set apart for a holy office, consecrated by the sacred oil of self-sacrifice to the highest work of God. "God's Son"—because to discharge that office, a power, a devotion, a righteousness and holiness more than man could give, were required. Thus the verse is an epitome of all that is to follow, of all that, in the end, can be told by the Evangelists, showing how the Carpenter of Nazareth became the Saviour of men.

St. Mark begins his story about Jesus with the ministry of John. He gives us no reason for this, and we are therefore left to our own resources to discover a probable explanation. The impression left upon one in reading the opening sections of our Gospel is, that the author seems so eager to enter upon the tale he has to tell, that he is unwilling

to delay with matters that appear subsidiary to the main work he has in hand. The story of Jesus in the earliest Gospel is a revelation of His public activity, and the work of John, provoking as it did much popular attention, appeared to the Evangelist a fitting point from which he himself could start. And when we think of the reformatory movement initiated and carried on for a period by the Baptist, and then taken up by Jesus—a work which appeared to be of considerable interest and extent—we can see that there was some appropriateness in taking this movement as a suitable place from which to commence his own narrative. The quotations given in verses 2 and 3 are probably intended to refer to John, and very particularly to indicate the preparatory character of his mission. One wonders whether they signify nothing more than that. As well as a reference to the Baptist, may there not also be found in them one to Jesus? The quotation from Isa. 40^3 as translated by Delitzsch runs thus: "Hark! One calling: In the wilderness prepare ye Jehovah's way, make plain in the desert a high-road for our God" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 135); and Principal G. A. Smith gives practically the same in his *Book of Isaiah* (vol. ii. p. 80). Now, undoubtedly, in the prophecy it is Jehovah's way that is to be prepared, while in the application of it in the Gospel it is Jesus' way. The inference would appear to be irresistible that thus early in the narrative the Evangelist identifies Jesus with Jehovah, and this very advanced position leads to the same difficulties as those dealt with in verse 1. It is probable, certainly, that we must be prepared for a more developed view of Christ in the introductory

part of St. Mark than we find in the body of the work which follows. The explanation of this may be found in this suggestion, that while in the introduction Mark is giving a view of Jesus that is the result of years of study, reflection, and experience, in the story of the Gospel proper he tries to present us with a lifelike picture of our Lord as He was seen and understood by the disciples and other early followers.

There is the same meagreness of detail in respect to John that we have noticed already regarding the person of Jesus. Only in the case of the former, probably indeed because the Baptist was such a striking figure, impressive, even unique, in his outward appearance, is it described. It is quite possible, if we may not put it even stronger than that, that the thought of John, that even his extraordinary appearance, remained for long as an image and impression in the mind of St. Peter, who was probably one of his disciples (John 1). All the Synoptists practically agree in their description of the Baptist, and Mark regards him as the messenger referred to by Malachi. We could have wished for more details concerning that strange, weird, lonely man who appeared as a meteor of righteousness, all too soon to pass into darkness. Yet, not before his work of preparation had been fully accomplished. It is well to remind ourselves, at this point, that we are now thinking of Jesus as a man; as one who had to grow up to man's estate, tried in all points as we are. Mark does not tell us, none of the Evangelists does, that which is also necessary to bear in mind, that Jesus was dependent upon the ordinary means provided in those times

for intellectual and moral education. Most of this He must have received in His own home, and in the synagogue at Nazareth. When He left that city He would require to utilise the other opportunities that might be available, if He was to make any further progress. One source that we know was open to Him when He had reached the estate of manhood, was listening to the thrilling, soul-searching words which fell from the lips of the Baptist. The report of the work of John had somehow been carried to Nazareth, and this had made a call upon Jesus that He could not resist. There can be no reasonable doubt that He, for a period, waited upon the ministry of the Baptist. How long this may have lasted we cannot say. But only such a supposition will explain the words, "There comes after me, he who is stronger than I, for whom I am not fit to stoop down and untie his shoe-string" (Menzies' translation). It seems quite justifiable to infer from this passage that John must have known already something about the impending appearance of the Christ, and to have formed a very high opinion of His character. Yet in the fourth Gospel John distinctly says he did not know Jesus at first (John 1^{31}). Of course, it is open for one to assert that the Baptist was speaking prophetically when he declared, "There comes after me he who is stronger than I," etc.; but it is quite gratuitous to fall back upon that position when everything else indicates the likelihood that Jesus was, for a time, drawn to the great reformatory movement carried on by John in the valley of the Jordan. We must not forget that Jesus, when He began to preach, commenced in the identical words

He had heard from the Baptist; neither should we overlook this other consideration, that some of John's followers were among the very earliest disciples of our Lord.

We would fain have more information concerning the relationship that existed between these two wonderful men, but in our Gospel very little more is forthcoming. That Jesus was influenced deeply by the Baptist is plain from the circumstance that He afterwards took up his battle-cry, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Yet, although they draw close in some, they stand far apart in other aspects of their work. The symbol that we must associate with John and his radical reformation, is that of a gleaming axe laid at the root of a tree. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, therefore, repent quickly or ye shall be cut off"—this seemed to have been the burden of his message. Right almost in the first recorded public act of Jesus the dove is set upon His brow—emblematical of the peaceful character of His spirit and methods. There is the same urgent cry for repentance, but the gentleness, patience, and compassion of Jesus have banished the axe out of sight. He must win men to Him by love and not by fear.

We have in the other Synoptics, *although not in Mark*, the testimony of Jesus to John; we are more concerned here with the testimony of John to Jesus, and it will, no doubt, be found in its most original and striking form in the *Earliest Gospel*. The central thought in the mind of the Baptist, the fundamental idea he appears to entertain respecting our Lord, is that He is a person of extraordinary might. It is of the utmost importance for us to

recognise and appreciate the testimony of John, for it is nothing less than the keynote of our Gospel. Repeatedly, as we shall see, the author returns to this idea of the power that Jesus possessed; that, indeed, may be regarded as the central fact around which everything else is grouped. From it the whole Christology of the Gospel radiates. It is, therefore, of prime importance to find this idea thus set in the forefront of the Baptist's statement. It might not be too much to affirm, that in this particular direction the Evangelist may be indebted to John for this characteristic of his Gospel. He does not offer any explanation for introducing Jesus in this way, and it may be urged with some reason that abruptness is a marked feature of the introductory part of his book. John is ushered in by two sentences taken from the prophets; Jesus in a somewhat vague and indirect manner in the verse already quoted.

There need be no hesitation in believing that the testimony of John was of considerable value to Jesus, especially at the commencement of His labours. The worth of a testimonial depends, to some extent, on the estimate we place upon the person who gives it. John the Baptist quite clearly was a man of great notoriety, power, and authority among the people. The peculiar circumstances attending his birth; his priestly lineage, and the claim to the prophetic office which he evidently made, must have combined to give him a distinct and important position in the life and society of the time. Probably this explains why he could address the people so boldly and yet provoke no resentment on their part. We can, consequently, set the value

of his testimony to Jesus at a very high figure. That such a man, at the beginning, should thus recognise the inherent worth of our Lord must neither be overlooked nor ignored.

Whether the appearance of the Baptist and his revival work were a sign to Jesus that the time had now arrived when He must Himself step out into the wide world of public effort, or whether, as He waited on the ministry of John, the passion for righteousness was awakened in His soul, and the powers which hitherto lay dormant were now, by the Baptist's fiery sentences, quickened into activity, we can hardly say. There are reasons for believing that there was some connection between the Baptist's work and the appearance of Jesus in a public capacity, though what this connection was has remained hitherto in obscurity. Be that as it may, the time arrived when He felt He must take a part in the great work of reformation being carried on in the valley of the Jordan, and that He must identify Himself directly with John's mission, and so He came to him to be baptised. Probably it must always remain a matter of individual opinion why He took this course. The difficulties that arise, however, do not belong to this Gospel, for St. Mark appears to be quite unconscious of any peculiarity in the situation. He simply records the fact that Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan. St. Luke follows him closely in this part of the narrative. It is interesting to find, therefore, that St. Matthew records the objection which the Baptist raised: "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" Perhaps this is an illustration of a more advanced

Christological view entertained by St. Matthew at this stage. St. Mark apparently was unconscious of any incongruity in Jesus thus coming to John; it may have been that the thought in his mind concerning the former at this particular juncture was, that He was only a young man come from Nazareth. It is, of course, always possible that he may not have known of the objection referred to by St. Matthew. That would be unlikely, certainly, if St. Peter was present at the baptism, but we have no information on that point, and Luke 3^{21} rather indicates that the baptism of Jesus was of a private character. There is evidently more than one source for the story.

Again, we are left by the author of *The Earliest Gospel* to conjecture a reason why Jesus desired to be baptised by John. There is certainly not much enlightenment in St. Matthew's suggestion—"thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"; but St. Mark does not give us even so much. If John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, it is clear that it could not possess this significance in the case of Jesus. For this reason it seems unnecessary to delay in an attempt to arrive at a fuller understanding of the import of John's baptism; the unconsciousness of sin on the part of our Lord constitutes His a unique case. Perhaps it will be sufficient to suggest as an explanation of this baptismal act on His part, that it possibly implied the abandonment of His former manner of life and His entrance upon a new career. It was both a renunciation and a consecration. A renunciation, in that He was giving up home and friends and relatives, relinquishing all the ties and associations that bound Him to the life of Nazareth. If He had

dreams, hopes, and ambitions such as are common to other men, it meant the abandonment of them for ever. If His heart was filled with earthly love, if human affection bound Him to His mother and His kindred, this simple act of baptism involved the yielding up of them all upon the altar of service. So completely to break with the past could not have been easy for Jesus, as it could not be easy for any man. Although our Evangelist tells us nothing about His home life, yet we are assured it was tender and sweet, pure and uplifting. We have reason to believe He was fond of Nazareth. He returned thither specially to speak to those with whom He had been brought up. What emotions must have filled His soul as He entered the old home and the old synagogue endeared to Him by many memories! Yet all these earthly ties and associations He renounced, in a very real way, when He went down into the Jordan to be baptised.

But, positively, the baptism signified the entrance of Jesus upon a new career. He was now responding to the inward call that had come into His soul from God Himself. It is quite clear He recognised this, although it is extremely doubtful whether, at first, He fully apprehended all that was involved in the act. Unquestionably it did not signify less than the consecration of Himself, with all the talents and powers He possessed, to the work for which He had been sent. In His case baptism, then, was in some degree comparable with the ideal we have before us in ordination. There was the same response to an inward call; a similar dedication of life with all its powers to the work of God, and the uplifting of His fellow-men. It is not improbable that Jesus did

not fully recognise the rough way in all its ruggedness over which His feet would have to tread; but even if He had, the result would have been just the same. He would have remained true and responsive to the call that the preaching of John had perhaps awakened in Him. He must whole-heartedly devote Himself to the establishment of the Kingdom of righteousness.

Possibly, too, this baptismal experience provided a period of inquiry and self-examination for Jesus. It hardly seems likely that any man, not even excepting Him, could turn His back upon thirty years of tranquil life in the village home and proceed to live in an absolutely different manner, and to engage upon work which hitherto was unfamiliar, without considerable thought and anxiety. The things of life that lay behind were familiar and well known; the enterprise upon which He was now engaged was indistinct and ill-defined; unfamiliar and unexpected difficulties, and even dangers might await Him. He was crossing the Rubicon now, and it could not be done without much careful and anxious consideration. To receive some mark of Divine approval that would confirm Him in the purpose He had taken in hand, that would establish in His mind the conviction that He was doing right in embarking upon this new work, was what He greatly required at the moment. And so the heavens were opened to His eye, and the Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Him. And, as if to make assurance doubly sure, there came a voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We trust we are not making an undue appeal to the imagination in suggesting

that possibly Jesus was meditating along the lines indicated above, and that, therefore, this message was sent to Him from heaven to place His mind at rest. Such an assurance given under such circumstances must have afforded Him great satisfaction. In considering this whole subject of our Lord's baptism, perhaps we are accustomed to dwell less upon the opening heavens and the descent of the Spirit, than upon the Voice from heaven with its comforting testimony. We appear inclined to hurry on to what we consider as definite and distinct assurance regarding the person of Jesus from heaven. Nevertheless, we do not well to pass over lightly this descent of the Spirit. It may be affirmed, without hesitation, that this was the last and most important gift that Jesus required to qualify Him fully for His holy office. Moreover, it was in the line of ancient tradition that Messiah was to be filled with the Spirit above measure: so that this gift in itself was an indication, if it was nothing more, that He was now acting in obedience to a Divine impulse, and that the resources of heaven were to be available in His great and glorious work. Still, it is not likely that He would forget the words of Zechariah: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4^6). Nor could there be any mistake as to the meaning of the symbolism in this descent of the dove. He was to go forward in the strength of the Spirit, but it was a spirit of gentleness and peace. This and nothing else can be the import of this incident, viz. that He who possessed such power must be meek and gentle in the exercise of it. We have only to remember the difference in the

descent of the Spirit at Pentecost to realise the intense significance this experience must have possessed for Jesus.

Sometimes a great deal is involved in the right translation of a verse; a point of doctrine of considerable importance may, for instance, depend upon the use of a particular tense. A striking example of this occurs in the first chapter. The eleventh verse is given in the A.V. as follows: "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." R.V.: "Thou art my beloved Son, *in thee* I am well pleased." Menzies: "And a voice from the heavens: Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I have found pleasure." Morrison: "In thee I was well pleased." The A.V. assimilates the reading of St. Mark to that found in St. Matt. 3^{17}, but wrongly so. Neither of them accounts for the tense of the verb, rendering it as a present, whereas εὐδόκησα is an Aorist. Menzies appears to take it as equivalent to a perfect. Morrison, as above, rightly as an Aorist. Swete comments on the use of the Aorist here, saying it "does not denote merely the historical process by which God came to take pleasure in Jesus 'during his earthly life' (Gould), but rather the satisfaction of the Father in the Son during the pre-existent life" (*cf.* John 1^{2}, 17^{24}). Morrison agrees. Menzies' note on the verse is fuller and more instructive. He regards the title as largely official. "The words 'in thee have I found pleasure', if expressive of Jesus' consciousness, would state the grounds of His being thus set apart, and might indicate that the official sonship into which he was now to be placed was founded on the sonship

of intimacy in which he had lived till now with God. Without the private religious life by which he learned so as to be able to teach others, how God was to be addressed and served, and what was to be expected from him, he could not have heard the special call which now met his ear." He goes on to discuss whether " beloved " can be taken in this way, and whether it was not, as many think at the time of the writing of the Gospels, a Messianic title. He then proceeds : " In any case, we have before us here a statement placed by the Evangelist at the opening of his narrative, of what Jesus was. He has no genealogy or narrative of the infancy, but he here gives his readers to understand that the person of whom he writes is the Messiah, and was hailed in that capacity by a voice from heaven, *i.e.* by God Himself, at the outset of his career."

Now that, of course, arises out of the words, " Thou art my beloved Son " ; but one wonders if the use of the Aorist εὐδόκησα really implied the pre-existence suggested by many in interpreting this passage. It is certainly an important and attractive idea, and confessedly we are not in a position to deny it or perhaps to offer anything better in its place. That need not prevent us from pointing out its weakness and improbability as an explanation. Does it not appear rather unlikely that on this very important occasion when Jesus was taking a step involving great decisions on His part, a voice from heaven, God's voice, should proclaim that He was well pleased with Him in His pre-existent state ? If the conditions of that state were such as we commonly suppose, Jesus could never have had any doubt that God was well pleased

with Him therein; the assurance would therefore be superfluous, and bear no relation to the crisis in which He was now placed. What He especially required at this time was a voice to assure Him that God was well pleased with Him in His present state, and we believe this voice from heaven spoke a message that had direct connection with the circumstances of the moment, so far as our Lord was concerned. As the spiritual impulses awakened in His soul, and He responded to the Divine call to service and sacrifice, the limitations of human flesh and understanding may have been partially obscuring His Divine Sonship from Himself, and He may have questioned whether all the thoughts which had passed through His mind regarding that were really true. So God's voice comes to Him, "Thou art my Son, my well beloved," in answer to such questions, hesitations, if we may not add even doubts, that conceivably thus assailed Him at this crisis. And we make the further suggestion, which can hardly be regarded as improbable, that as He realised the work that was given Him to do, as He began to apprehend its great necessity and its urgent character, the thought may have arisen that possibly He had delayed too long in the quietness and seclusion of His home at Nazareth; that human ties and claims had in the thirty years that lay behind pressed too heavily upon Him, and too completely absorbed His whole attention, while the real work for which He came to earth remained unheeded. And so the word from heaven, "in thee I was well pleased," would convey this satisfying message, that the Father was perfectly satisfied with the work at Nazareth, which was now of the past. That, in fact,

the time spent there had not been in vain, and the work which He had accomplished there was such as He ought to perform. Such an assurance as this would be a great comfort to Jesus; it would be inspiring thus to know that in quitting the scenes of His youth, and in laying aside the responsibilities that rested upon Him in the home at Nazareth, He had the approval of God. We know it is true to the best teaching of Christianity, that the duties of home are as sacred, and sometimes their claims are as pressing, as more distinctly religious and public ministrations. Jesus required just now to be certain that in His past conduct in regard to family, home, and friends He had acted rightly, and we think this positive declaration was conveyed in the words, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I was well pleased."

CHAPTER IV

PREPARING FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

THE immediate succession of the temptation of Jesus upon His baptism has been regarded often as an outstanding illustration of how the forces of evil appear to be most alert and active after a period of spiritual uplifting. It may be so, but it is quite possible that in the case of Jesus the connection between these two important events was due to a different reason, and was also so close that the one may be looked upon as, to some extent, the outcome of the other. The temptation in each of the three cases turns upon the words, "If thou be the Son of God." As we have just now seen, that was the thought that was exercising the mind of Jesus very greatly at this stage, and concerning which the voice from heaven gave Him assurance. We may conclude that even that did not finish the struggle in His mind; or at any rate, if it did make Him certain on the point, the aftermath of the struggle is now being experienced in the Temptation. It could not have been easy for Jesus to answer such questions as probably suggested themselves at this time—"Whence have I come?" "Who am I?" "The Son of God?" "Yes; but in what sense? All men in a measure are His sons. His beloved Son? Am I

then Messiah? If so, how shall I carry on Messiah's work? I am poor, without resources, and His Kingdom is to be glorious. What means can I employ in undertaking such formidable tasks?" These, and many questions like them, must have thrust themselves directly forward for His attention at the beginning of His work, and perhaps the story of the temptation indicates the sort of answers He gave to them. He received in this temptation a twofold challenge: (*a*) as to the validity of His call; (*b*) as to the means He was to use in obeying it.

These two points become manifest when we consider the narrative of the temptation as given in Matt. 4^{1-11} and Luke 4^{1-13}, but as we are to follow the lead of St. Mark we do not require to be occupied with so much detail. He gives us but few particulars, and these are contained in the twelfth and thirteenth verses of chapter 1: "And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him." We have here one of those touches which show us the kinship of Jesus to the human race. At nearly all the outstanding crises of life, when men have to fight a battle in which great and weighty issues are involved, they must go out into the wilderness; they must be alone with their tempter; or it may be in different conditions they must be alone with their God. Men who have had any experience of a break in their life, although approaching only to a degree that which was now taking place in the case of Jesus, will understand how that He was impelled to go forth into the desert, where He would not likely be

interrupted, and face the situation in all its sternness and fight out the future course of life to a finish. It is true, as we have seen, Mark is not much occupied with the human side of Jesus, but we surely get an impressive glimpse of that humanity here. Jesus at this juncture is forced, as any of us would have been forced in such a situation, to face the tempter boldly. Perhaps our author is right in giving no details of the temptations themselves. It cannot be supposed that the forty days occupied in the wilderness were fully consumed by the three temptations described by Matthew and Luke. These possibly were three outstanding lines along which our Lord was specially tried; and Mark is perhaps quite correct in leaving us with the impression that our Lord was tempted for the full forty days.

Our Evangelist places this scene in a situation of extreme loneliness; that appears to be his purpose in giving the wilderness such prominence in his story; and to the casual reader the additional reference to the wild beasts, which is peculiar to our Gospel, will intensify the conceivable horrors of the situation. It is doubtful, however, if these points should be pressed; perhaps all that is meant is that Jesus experienced this temptation in comparative seclusion and isolation. We may be sure He was urged to His greatest, most heroic endurance by a full realisation of the issues at stake. It was, we believe, in the year 1911 that Capt. Scott made his gallant attempt to reach the South Pole. The world has possibly forgotten the brave act of Capt. Oates in March 1912 in connection with that expedition. Being badly frost-bitten, he was unable to walk, and had to be carried on a sledge. Realising,

however, that if his companions were to have any chance of saving themselves they must not be encumbered with his weight, and knowing also that they would never abandon him, he quietly slipped off the sledge and went out alone into the wilderness of frost and snow to fight the great adversary to the last. His self-sacrifice was necessary for the salvation of his friends. So was it with Jesus now. He was fighting alone, but there must have been before His mind a consciousness that the struggle was not simply a personal affair—others were irrevocably involved in it. To save others He cannot save Himself. Even though we interpret this temptation as only a question of ways and means, it certainly implied that Jesus had to choose the rough way and the apparently inadequate means if He was to be true to the Divine Light now breaking in His soul. There is a very old tradition to the effect that on one occasion, when our Lord as a child was playing at Nazareth, He stretched out His arms, and His mother beheld the shadow of a cross upon the ground, and the sword of foreboding entered her heart afresh. Whether there is any truth in that story or not who can possibly say ? but it seems not unlikely that at this early stage the shadow of a cross appeared before Him, in this period of temptation. Even in a question of the ways and means most suitable for His future purpose, Jesus must have realised that if He was to take up the Messianic work and prosecute His claim in the way that appeared best to Him, such a course would inevitably bring Him into conflict with the Jewish hierarchy and national leaders. He could also easily foresee that in a trial

of physical forces He must soon fall before His opponents. The knowledge of the intense bitterness of the cup He might yet require to drink was no doubt not fully before Him, but it is not impossible He had a foretaste of it while He was being tempted in the wilderness.

Possibly they are not taking an exact and correct view of "the temptation" who find in it a resumption of the hostility between Satan and *man*, commenced at the beginning with Adam the first man, and now renewed in Jesus—the second Adam. This trial was manifestly peculiar to Jesus; and it would, we feel, be unjustifiable to suppose that it was but a mere phase in the eternal struggle of elemental moral principles. There are those who are inclined to take the more moderate, and we may say more modern view, and regard it as only involving the important question of the employment of the right means for carrying out the programme Jesus had set before Him. Take one of the temptations as an illustration: He had up to this point worked for His own livelihood. He had earned His own bread as a Carpenter at Nazareth. It must have been an anxious question with Him how He would fare in the future, when He and those who should become His disciples must depend upon the benefactions of the charitable. "You can always perform a miracle to save yourself from hunger," says the voice of the tempter. "Never," rejoins Jesus; "that power was not given to me to minister to my own comfort. How could I become the friend of the hungry, if I miraculously preserved myself from hunger?" To perform a miracle to save Himself from the pain and suffering other men

had to endure, was not the way to reveal His strength, or to prove to the world that He was the Messiah.

If we agree that the essence of the temptation is found in a conflict in the mind of Jesus as to the appropriate ways and means to be employed in His future work in founding and establishing the Messianic Kingdom, we are not, therefore, entitled to conclude that this temptation was ethically colourless. When two ways of obtaining an object are before us, if one of them is morally higher than the other, if we are to remain true to our ethical consciousness, we must take the higher. This was especially so in the case of Jesus. However hard, unequal, toilsome, and disadvantageous the road for Him might be, if it was the best, if it was God's way, then it must be taken. Not to do so was to utterly fail.

Formerly it was a favourite subject for Theological Debating Societies to discuss whether it was possible for Jesus to have fallen in this temptation. The writer well remembers such a debate in which it was contended that if Jesus had succumbed to temptation it would have proved that He was not Divine, but because He was Divine He could not fail. The answer that was given was "then the temptation was only a farce and there was nothing real in it." But Jesus was a man, and as such "He was tempted in all points as we are." We need have no hesitation in believing this was both a real and terrible experience in the life of our Lord, and that it involved a conflict of great severity may be inferred from the words of our author, "and the angels ministered unto him."

It is very interesting to discover that St. Mark

does not give any idea as to whether Jesus was successful in this period of temptation. He leaves that to be deduced from the narrative. We would be left in considerable difficulty in dealing with this whole incident if we had nothing but his Gospel to depend upon. Perhaps this is because he knows that the story that he is about to relate will best assure the reader of the complete victory of Jesus. It is difficult to account for the meagreness of detail in connection with an incident that would have suited his purpose so well in showing the power of our Lord over the most formidable of His enemies. We can only assume that the subject in St. Mark's day was regarded as too sacred to be entered into fully, and it was only in the next decade that it was discovered how impressively it enhanced the glory of the Lord, by showing that He could meet the adversary and completely put him to silence at every point. The account of the temptation closes the distinctively introductory matter in St. Mark's Gospel.

Just exactly what happened immediately after the temptation is not indicated by our Evangelist. We might, of course, appeal to the other Gospels to supply this deficiency, but that would not be keeping strictly to the object before us, which is to consider the Christology of the Earliest Gospel. It is sufficient to indicate that at this point much of the material found in the first few chapters of the fourth Gospel might be introduced. It is quite evident there is a break in the narrative at the end of the thirteenth verse of St. Mark, and some scholars believe that, with the beginning of the succeeding verse, we come into direct contact with the influence of St. Peter as the informant and mentor of

St. Mark (so Salmon, p 75). This is very likely, although there does not seem any insuperable obstacle which could have prevented him from having received from the Apostle most of the particulars already given in the earlier verses, for even supposing these did not come within Peter's own personal experience, he could easily have learned them from others, or from Jesus Himself. The point is not of material importance. It is interesting to find that the casting of John into prison appeared to be a signal to Jesus that He was now to enter upon His own public ministry. This, of course, would suggest that He Himself understood there was a relationship between His work and that of John; but that point has been before us already.

Still, the significant fact that the Evangelists represent Jesus as taking up the words of John at the beginning of His preaching, must be dwelt upon for a moment. St. Mark gives very few particulars of the Baptist's preaching as compared with St. Matthew, yet he shows distinctly that Jesus began to preach precisely the same doctrines as John; adopting at first, indeed, identical language. It is perfectly legitimate to infer that this implied an intended continuity in the reformatory work begun by the latter. It would appear to have been necessary in the circumstances, that a very definite relationship should be established between them, so far as their work was concerned. If the one was the forerunner of the Other, if Jesus was the fulfilment of John's message, then there must have been an evident connection and harmony in their preaching and teaching. All this is indeed implied

in the very first words uttered by Jesus in His public ministry, as recorded by St. Mark. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel" ($1^{14f.}$). *Cf.* Matt. $3^{1f.}$, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

It is to be expected from the character of the Gospel upon which we are engaged that we do not get the same full details of the preaching of Jesus in it, which we discover in the other Synoptic writers. Most people are familiar with the important place that the teaching occupies in St. Matthew and even in St. Luke. Still, we find that the doctrine of the Kingdom of God receives here the same prominence as is accorded to it in the other Gospels. Yet, notwithstanding the emphasis laid upon this idea by all the Evangelists, it is somewhat extraordinary to find that no exact definition of the Kingdom is forthcoming. To obtain an adequate idea of it, it is necessary to gather together the whole teaching of Jesus on the subject, and from this endeavour to form such a conception as shall fully comprehend that teaching. Yet, even when that is attempted, the results which were expected may not appear, because it may be found extremely difficult to blend certain passages that sound inharmonious one with another. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to indicate the points dealt with in St. Mark's Gospel, without entering into any detailed discussion of the passages; because

to do so would lead us too far away from the main theme of our subject.

1. The Kingdom is at hand (1^{15}).
2. ,, ,, ,, a unity (inferred from $3^{24ff.}$).
3. ,, ,, illustrated by parables (4^{11}).
   (*a*) Like seed sown secretly (4^{26-29}).
   (*b*) Like a grain of mustard seed (4^{30-34}).
4. Some of those then living were to see the Kingdom coming with power (9^{1}).
5. Men should suffer loss that they may enter into the Kingdom (9^{4-7}).
6. It is to be received in childlike simplicity ($10^{14f.}$).
7. Riches a hindrance to entering therein ($10^{23ff.}$).
8. Love to God and men brings us near to the Kingdom (15^{34}).
9. Perhaps we might say, It is the perfecting of heavenly communion (14^{25}).
10. The Kingdom was an expectation of many in Israel (15^{43}). (See on this also Luke $2^{25, 38}$.)

Even these references show us the prominence and importance which the idea of the Kingdom receives in the Earliest Gospel, and enable us to appreciate the emphatic declarations regarding it in the preaching and teaching of Jesus. The enunciation of the Kingdom certainly appears somewhat sudden and unexpected, still it was neither an unusual nor unfamiliar thought to those whom Jesus was addressing. It is not at all probable that He would have commenced His public teaching with some strange and unknown reference, which would not have been understood by His hearers. There is no doubt, as can be seen from No. 10 above, that in His preaching on this subject He

began by working upon an idea that was well known, and which was possibly occupying the Jewish mind a great deal about this time. Menzies says: "The notion that God Himself should rule over a people thoroughly prepared to serve Him, is of old standing in Jewish thought and is found in psalms and prophets" (p. 64). Nevertheless, it is safe to affirm that Jesus was not depending upon contemporary Jewish thought for His doctrine of the Kingdom. Indeed it appears from Edersheim's chapter on the "Sermon on the Mount," "The Kingdom of Christ and Rabbinic Teaching" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*," cap. xviii. vol. i.), that He could not have received practically any help from the Rabbinic writings in the development of this doctrine. Whence, then, did He receive it? Undoubtedly, as Menzies asserts, from the psalms and the prophets. In His preaching on this subject He does what He also accomplishes when He proceeds to His interpretation of the law—He resurrects the dead and practically forgotten truths of the past. He brings to light the sublime utterances of prophet and seer that had remained hidden and long neglected among the rubbish of Jewish tradition, and clothes them anew in language that gives them fresh vitality and power. Yet the idea of a reign of God upon the earth was a familiar one to the Jews. Their rabbis painted Him as really having the Torah in His right hand; instead, Jesus gave to men the royal law of brotherliness—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7^{12})—and reveals to them God as the Perfect Father in Heaven. In regard to the preaching of Jesus

generally, it might, we think, be justifiable to assert that frequently all that He owed to the past was but a skeleton, and to this He gave flesh and blood, and infused it with the vital spark of living and abiding truth.

Perhaps the subject that we might say came second in the preaching of Jesus was that of repentance. This inevitably arose out of His teaching concerning the Kingdom. If God was to come and establish such a reign among men; if He was to appear and introduce a personal rule upon earth, then there must be a proper preparation for His coming. His subjects ought to be in a right condition to receive Him. What that condition was, Jesus makes quite plain by the first public word almost that He proclaimed: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." The justification of His enunciation of the Kingdom and His call for repentance make it manifest that He regarded these two subjects as closely related. Although there is very little indication to be found in St. Mark's Gospel of the importance of repentance, it cannot be questioned that it occupied as prominent a place in the teaching of Jesus, as it appeared to have done in that of John. Even in this Gospel, the few passages which refer to it are extremely suggestive. In addition to the one quoted above, we have only two other precise references to this subject in the work before us. One of these, however, must have fallen upon the ears of some of those who heard it with great comfort and hopefulness; and it would be no exaggeration to affirm that it has been an inspiration to many a

weary and heavily laden sinner since: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (2^{17}). In the other Synoptics this grace of repentance receives much more conspicuous attention; in both of them, indeed, Jesus becomes the "Friend of publicans and sinners"; but in the words just quoted from Mark, there is such an emphatic declaration of His purpose, such an evident apprehension of the necessities of the situation, as leads us to understand the emphasis He must often have given to the subject when preaching to the people. This declaration, moreover, reveals to some extent the religious condition which Jesus was now encountering in His public ministry. There was apparently (1) a section of the community regarding which it was generally agreed, evidently for various reasons, that such persons especially required to repent; these were known and commonly spoken of as "sinners." It is not, however, to be understood that they were notable evil-doers. It is much more likely they represented that class among the people which had ceased to be punctilious in the observance of their ritualistic and ceremonial duties, or even those who did not, perhaps, attend the synagogues very regularly. The publicans might be regarded as a kind of sub-class of these: the great objection against them was that they were engaged in the work of collecting taxes, which was no more popular then than it is now. Such people were referred to as "sinners" by the stricter ceremonialists and more scrupulous observers of the traditions of the elders. (2) These latter formed what we might call the second class; they were among those upon whom the teaching of Jesus

appeared to have but little effect. They were self-satisfied, and thought they required nothing that He could give. Still, the call which He addressed to sinners, urging them to repent, must have had an arresting and even hopeful effect upon many of the despised and down-trodden—the poor and rejected of that time. Both the social and ecclesiastical outcasts of those days must have been drawn to this *Man* who spoke to them so kindly, and pleaded with them so tenderly. We will do well, therefore, to observe how prominently Jesus sets this call to repentance in the forefront, right at the beginning of His work. As John the Baptist prepared His way, so was He now, by this teaching, preparing the way for the coming of the Kingdom. Repentance was necessary for the remission of sins; and this in turn was indispensable for entrance into the Kingdom. Purity must prevail if God was to reign among men.

The only other passage in which repentance is referred to in this Gospel so far as any relation to Jesus is concerned, is in 6^{12}, where it is written the disciples "went out and preached that men should repent." It will be noticed that the connection with our Lord in this case is indirect. We may certainly assume the disciples were true students, and devoted imitators of their Master. What He had preached to the people they must declare also. It is to be supposed that the theme which made itself most impressive on themselves was the one they were likely to emphasise when they commenced preaching on their own account, and it is rather surprising to discover that this was not the coming of the Kingdom, as we would have expected, but the

necessity for repentance. Indeed, even after the crucifixion and resurrection this was still the case; generally the burden of apostolic preaching was "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20^{21}). Only faint references, if any at all, are found in the Epistles of James, Peter, and John to the Kingdom, and even in the fourth Gospel, which we agree was written late, allusions to it are neither prominent nor important. There are, it is true, distinct references in the Acts and Pauline Epistles. Still, it is quite justifiable to assert that the main theme in the preaching of the disciples and those immediately associated with them, was repentance rather than the realisation of the Kingdom. One wonders whether the effect of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 may not have had some influence in subduing the imperialistic note in the preaching about that time.

In proclaiming the approach of the Kingdom of God, Jesus, perhaps, first called for repentance; but immediately, and we might say indissolubly, associated with that was the call for faith, "repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Although we are now giving faith the same sequence as we find in Mark 1^{15}, there is no intention to draw any comparison as to the relative importance of these virtues or doctrines. It might be quite correct to affirm that there cannot, in the end, be true repentance without faith; neither can there be true faith without repentance. Jesus does not, in His preaching, draw any comparison between these two spiritual graces, but in the Gospel before us, faith is much more frequently and prominently mentioned

than repentance. It is rather instructive to find that in it also, although it is the shortest of the Gospels, faith and belief are as frequently referred to as in either Matthew or Luke. Taking both words together, they are found in Matthew seventeen times, in Mark eighteen, and the same in Luke. The word faith is discovered nine times in Matthew, five in Mark, and eleven in Luke. Believe is consequently used oftener in Mark than by the other two. The word faith is not found in John; he always uses believe. It is significant to observe that to some extent Mark and John thus approach each other in their use of words; we shall have occasion to refer to this point later.

That Jesus would lay the greatest possible emphasis upon faith is to be expected when we consider the nature of the work upon which He was engaged. He was proclaiming the approach of a Kingdom that was non-material, and, therefore, largely obscure and intangible. It is certainly possible the use of the phrase "the Kingdom of God" suggested to most of the people who heard it, at any rate at the first, something that was visible, an organisation having power and resources within it. Indeed it is not unlikely that the words signified to some of them a restored, purified, and more glorious dominion for Israel. "When the Jews of Jesus' time spoke of the Kingdom of God, they thought of a world-power which should throw off the hated yoke of the Roman oppression" (Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 59). But the Kingdom which Jesus was proclaiming and establishing now was "not of this world" (John 18^{36}); it was spiritual, and so it required faith as a medium for

its apprehension and realisation. A great deal of His work actually required to be taken on trust. Many of His promises to the disciples, and to the people, could only have fulfilment in a future life. In fact, we may conclude that everything in the situation, as it then existed, would incline Jesus to give faith a foremost place in His preaching. It needed to be exercised not only in His word, but also in respect of His work. Unless faith were present He could do no mighty works; and in the presence of rank unbelief He was impotent. With faith, however, all things were possible. His own life was one of faith. His power appeared to be dependent to a considerable extent on complete and perfect confidence in God—His Father. The work in which He now found Himself engaged was essentially a religious movement. However men may have misunderstood this, it was always clearly before His own mind; and faith was then, as it still is, one of the foundation stones of religion. Without it Jesus knew the Kingdom never could have been established, and progress in His undertaking would have been impossible. It was the great aim of His life to enkindle and foster faith in His disciples and those who came to hear Him. There is a multitude of passages that might be cited in support of that; nothing indeed is plainer in all the Gospels.

CHAPTER V

PARABLES AND PREACHING

HAVING considered very briefly some of the more important topics that occupied Jesus in His preaching, it may be opportune at this point if we endeavour to obtain some idea of the style which Jesus adopted in this department of His work. Most men gifted with preaching power stamp their individuality on their utterances. Jesus has certainly done so in a remarkable degree. In the parabolic style sometimes adopted by Him in His teaching, He has no rivals. Very few have even dared to attempt this method in their public teaching, and not even the very best attempts are worthy to be compared with the parables of our Lord in their inimitable sublimity, illustrative forcefulness, and beautiful simplicity. Not one of the disciples or followers of Jesus appears to have thought of imitating Him in this direction; no doubt they all realised the hopelessness of such an attempt. The few modern efforts to introduce this style, which have been made from time to time, have not been very successful. It is worth our while to remind ourselves at this point that Jesus was only a Galilean peasant in one aspect of His life, and never enjoyed the intellectual opportunities

common to our day. Yet in this one characteristic of His literary style He is utterly unapproachable in beauty of conception and simplicity of form. The volume of parabolic material in the Earliest Gospel is not great—only some five or six parables being recorded in it, although we may rest assured St. Peter remembered many more than those preserved therein. It is the old explanation, St. Mark is occupied with deeds rather than words. Only one of the number just mentioned can be put in the class of the more important and lengthy parables. This is "the sower" ($4^{3ff.}$). The others are "the strong man" (3^{27}); "the seed growing secretly," illustrative of the unostentatious progress of the Kingdom ($4^{26ff.}$); "grain of mustard seed," revealing the growth and power of the Kingdom ($4^{30ff.}$); "on defilement"—against ceremonial purification which neglects inward purity (7^{15}); and "wicked husbandmen," or Jewish rejection of God's grace, and cruel treatment of His servants (12^{1-11}). The style of the parables may well suggest the question whether in His preaching Jesus used any very lengthy form of address such as would correspond with the modern sermon. It is rather instructive to discover that nearly all His utterances are of the crisp and concise class that would readily take hold of the mind of His hearers, and be retained in their memories. There are many probabilities indicating that He frequently expounded portions of the Old Testament which were read in the synagogue. But even then the great object, undoubtedly, was to produce a practical effect rather than a purely intellectual one. He certainly desired to instruct, but still more He was anxious to bring conviction

home to those who heard Him. We may well infer, then, from the parables as from other forms of utterance He may have employed, that His supreme object was to impart the truth in all its fulness, with convincing power; to produce a moral and spiritual effect upon those who heard Him.

Having dealt with some of the more important subjects that occupied Jesus as a preacher, we may now extend our research into a wider and more general field. And first of all, we may observe that it is possible there were topics in His preaching of which no record has been preserved. Certainly we have reason to believe that this is so in regard to St. Mark's Gospel, because he gives us so little of it; but it is also true in regard to the other Evangelists, who give us fuller details of this aspect of His ministry. The author of the fourth Gospel states quite definitely that he has only given a selection of the doings of Jesus (21^{25}); the same would no doubt be true about His sayings. We cannot consider any of the Gospels as exhaustive in regard to these matters. Neither in respect of the word spoken, nor the work performed, could they possibly represent a full record of a ministry of three years. It is almost a waste of time, then, to strive to interpret the so-called silence of Jesus, for the simple reason that we do not know if He was silent concerning the particular topic in which we are for the moment interested. Yet, sometimes, even well-informed people, and New Testament scholars, too, try to fill in this supposed silence, or at any rate to explain it with much detail. It certainly may be a good exercise of the imagination, but the most elaborate theories may only be trifles, light as the

airy foundations upon which they rest. As an illustration of such a method of interpretation, let us suppose that we have only the Gospel by St. Mark before us. Knowing from it that Jesus was a man of prayer Himself, we might begin to theorise as to why He did not teach His disciples to pray. Yet Matthew and Luke show us how different the situation actually was, and reveal how careful He was to instruct His followers in this very important duty. Well, with even all the Gospels before us, we cannot be sure that Jesus never referred to a subject because no mention of it is found in them. It need not be supposed that He was not a profound teacher, even though there is very little didactic matter in the Earliest Gospel. The silence of the Gospel is a different affair altogether. There may have been many reasons why a particular author has not recorded some special incident. We may regret, then, this meagreness of the record in Mark as to the preaching and teaching of Jesus, and may even wish to search out a cause in explanation of it; but we need have no hesitation in assuring ourselves, at this point, that it was not because either Jesus or Mark undervalued preaching. That is clear enough from 1^{38}, where the former answers Peter and those who were with him, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." We shall require to examine this statement in another connection later on, and so do not dwell upon it here.

Although the details are not very abundant, yet with St. Mark's guidance we can form a picture of Jesus as a preacher which should be attractive, and even very suggestive. We have been occupied just

now considering briefly the beginning of His missionary labours, and striving to obtain some information as to His methods. The material at our disposal in this connection is sufficient to show that in this work He followed the usual methods—those, indeed, that are often pursued with considerable success at the present day. He appealed to the minds and souls of men, He strove to bring home conviction of sin, and to lead them to repentance and faith. We may presume that He found this the best means of presenting to them the truths of that Gospel He desired to proclaim. And although it cannot be denied that there was considerable excitement in connection with His missionary labours, yet it could not be truly said that His methods were those of the sensationalist. The great object He set before Him was to bring men from unbelief to faith in the Living God, from a life of sin to one of holiness, from greed and selfishness to righteousness and justice.

Are there any data that would enable us to form a true idea whether Jesus was successful as a missionary and preacher? If we could be satisfied on that point, it might help us in coming to the conclusion that it would be advisable to imitate Him in His methods. There is an initial difficulty which we must first dispose of: it is this, What is the criterion we are to employ in testing whether the work of our Lord was or was not successful? It is a very common modern method to take the number of those who profess conversion in connection with any particular mission, and in this way to form an estimate of its success or failure. Judged by this standard, what can we conclude in reference to the

work of Jesus? Generally speaking, the tone of all the Gospels leaves us with the impression that the number of actual believers in Him during His earthly life was not very considerable. There is no doubt, for a period, the crowds flocked to hear Him, and the multitudes thronged round Him and His disciples, and (Mark 2^4) considerable success appeared to attend His efforts at first. But it is quite apparent that all this enthusiasm did not last. St. John tells us: "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (6^{66}). When the supreme crisis of His life came, St. Mark informs us: "they all forsook him and fled" (14^{50}). Very few names are mentioned in connection with the period of the crucifixion; at this time it is very probable that the number of believers, at any rate in Jerusalem, was extremely small. If we take a show of hands then, to use that expression, it does not appear that we could count up a large company of professed followers of Jesus at the close of His earthly ministry, and the conclusion may seem inevitable that, regarded from this standpoint, His missionary labours were a comparative failure. We may pause a moment, however, before we absolutely commit ourselves to such a position. There is an important passage in Acts 1^{15} which, perhaps, deserves some consideration in this connection. It informs us that "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)." Many people of thought, following De Wette, have come to the conclusion that this was the total number of the Christian Church at this time. And, possibly, many a lesson has been deduced from this verse not complimentary

to the faith, steadfastness, nor understanding of that generation. Are we bound to accept this interpretation of the words quoted above? We think not. It seems much more probable that the author of Acts means the number of those gathered about Jerusalem at this time was one hundred and twenty. He is, for the moment, dealing with the events which took place in and around that city immediately consequent upon the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It is quite likely, indeed almost certain, that there were many other disciples in Galilee. Moreover, the number at Jerusalem, in view of the circumstances, was not so very insignificant; there was a good deal of loyalty and determination represented by these one hundred and twenty souls. Neither must we forget the thousands who flocked into the Church immediately after Pentecost. We may well believe these multitudes represented the harvest resulting from His previous sowing, for even in the case of Jesus it was true—"one soweth and another reapeth" (John 4^{37}). It cannot be supposed the work in Galilee would immediately disappear, or be utterly dissipated, as soon as Jesus removed Himself from that sphere of operations. It is certainly rather singular that that province is not mentioned in Acts 1^{8}, which may be regarded as giving the appointed field for future missionary operations. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Those commentaries we have been able to consult do not appear to notice that Galilee is omitted in this verse. This is a silence that may possibly be

explained, for the omission is very striking. It is most natural to expect that the provinces should have been named in their order—Judæa, Samaria, Galilee, and "unto the uttermost part of the earth." We can only hazard the opinion that Galilee is not specially mentioned because there was no danger of it being overlooked. The other provinces, we know, had not received the same attention as had been bestowed upon it: Jesus and the disciples had laboured diligently there; the latter were bound to it by many ties; it would not, therefore, be neglected. But may we not add there was less need for evangelistic effort in Galilee? It had had its day of grace under the most favourable circumstances, and there can be little doubt Galileans were the backbone of the Church at first. We may not be able to estimate in figures the work of Jesus as a missionary, but these considerations ought to satisfy us that the total body of believers at His death must have far exceeded the one hundred and twenty mentioned in Acts 1^{15}.

But really no spiritual effort can be satisfactorily measured by numbers. This is a clear inference from the words of Jesus: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark $8^{36f.}$). If the value of one human soul is so incomparable, it may be considered that the estimating of results of modern missionary efforts by counting the numbers of those who profess to have been influenced, is not a trustworthy method. Jesus never practised it. To have performed the good acts that He accomplished, to have been the instrument in turning many sinners from

darkness into light, to have laid the foundations of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, to have sown the seed of Divine truth so that it brought in such a rich and even abundant fruit—that certainly affords ample assurance of the great success of His missionary undertakings; and no follower could possibly do better than adopt His methods.

But there is something even more positive than that. St. Mark indicates frequently the remarkable impression that Jesus created by His doctrine and teaching. Perhaps there is no other verse in the whole narrative that shows more distinctly the effect of the preaching of Jesus upon the people than 1^{22}: "And they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." The same idea of astonishment at the authoritative note in the teaching of Jesus is found in 1^{27}, 2^{12}, 4^{41}, 5^{20}, 5^{42}, 6^{2}, 7^{37}, 9^{15}, 11^{18}. Some of these references (2^{12}, 4^{41}, 5^{20}, 5^{42}, 7^{37}, 9^{15}) are distinctly associated with miraculous works; but even so, the astonishment is caused by the power in the word of Jesus. Chapter 1^{22} is the centre of the position, and the others are for the most part a repetition of it. Salmon in *The Human Element in the Gospels* draws attention to the peculiarity of the parallel passages in St. Luke 4^{32}: "And they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with power." He suggests that Luke did not take the same interpretation of the record in Mark as is commonly received, but inferred that the power or authority was to exorcise demons: "In St. Luke's report we find ἐξουσία attributed to our Lord in His character, not of a teacher, but an *exorciser* of demons. He seems to have in view, not the

authority which our Lord exercised over the hearers, who were bound meekly to receive His instructions, but over the demons, who were compelled to obey the commands which He had power to enforce." Perhaps there is a good deal of truth in that view; in most cases where it is mentioned, this astonishment is associated with a miracle. But we are not sure that Salmon quite accurately represents the situation. If St. Mark's order of events is to be taken here and relied upon strictly, verse 1^{22} indicates astonishment that followed upon the preaching of Jesus alone, in the synagogue at Capernaum, and *before* any miracle was performed. It must, therefore, refer to the authoritative manner of His preaching, and doubtless the intention is to show that in this respect it was different from the scribes. The fresh amazement indicated in verse 27 is in consequence of the miracle. It is scarcely likely that the Evangelist would have written these two verses so closely together with exact reference to the same circumstance, and it is noticeable that he deliberately makes verse 27 refer to the miracle. Prof. Curtis in his lectures on the passage suggested ἐξουσία meant "spiritual power": "The descent of the Spirit brought ἐξουσία, authorisation, hence our word 'licence' in connection with ministerial functions. This ἐξουσία is in turn delegated to Apostles (Mark 6^{7}, 13^{44}; John 1^{12})." But he further pertinently remarks that "teaching exercises authority. The charm of the teaching of Jesus had much to do with the miracle. To the outsider the miracle would be δύναμις; to Jesus it was ἐξουσία, power, authority." But manifestly, there must have been authority and power in the

word of Jesus or there would have been no miracle. It is quite clear that this is the dominant note that struck on the ear of St. Mark, and as it is the one which sounds possibly clearest and most distinctly throughout the whole Gospel, we are not, therefore, surprised to find it here in connection with the opening of the work of Jesus. Fairly interpreted, verse 22 of chapter 1 draws attention to the fact that there was something very positive in the teaching of our Lord, and that it took hold upon the mind of the hearer, as we could expect, almost irresistibly. That His preaching and teaching gave much satisfaction to those who heard Him is abundantly made evident from other incidents and passages. In 6^{2} we are informed that in Nazareth, His own village, people were astonished at His teaching. Perhaps one of the best testimonies to His work in this respect is found in 12^{37}, "and the common people heard him gladly." Our point is surely well established that verse 1^{22} refers to His preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, and shows us the result of that preaching was such as to create amazement in those who heard the discourse. It is our great loss that even one of these synagogue sermons has not been preserved, although it may be presumed it would not have differed very materially from the doctrines which we otherwise possess.

It will be appropriate here to notice the importance that Jesus attached to preaching. He appears to have given it the foremost place in His own public work. Incidentally, we have already referred to the words of 1^{38}, deferring a more detailed consideration of them; it will be suitable to take them up at this point. "Let us go into the next

towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." The circumstances apparently indicate that Jesus, having engaged in a great deal of healing work in Capernaum, had retired to rest. But rising up during the darkness of the night, He went away into a lonely place and engaged in prayer. When daylight arrived the people began again to crowd round the house in which He had found a lodging (probably Peter's), but only to discover that He had already gone away. Even Peter and those with him seem to have been astonished at this movement on the part of their Master; they were quite pleased with what had taken place at Capernaum on the evening before. They set out in search of Jesus, and having found Him, "they said unto him, All men seek for thee," and to them Jesus replied as above.

Now, on any interpretation of this passage it shows us that Jesus laid the greatest possible emphasis upon the office of preaching. This was to have first claim upon His own strength, time, and opportunity. And we are also quite justified by the circumstances of the case just now narrated, in concluding that He considered preaching the Gospel of more importance than performing what we call miracles. This decision may, of course, astonish us; and there are perhaps people who would be disposed to believe our Lord acted somewhat hastily in coming to the conclusion not to return to Capernaum at this time and take the tide there at its flow. Such an opinion, however, can only be the product of a superficial view of the situation. He might certainly have dazzled men's eyes by wonderful deeds, and through such means created even a

wider interest in Himself and His movement. But it is doubtful if that would have been a real gain, or would have been of permanent advantage in the furtherance of His main purpose. The whole history of the race shows that the only effective way to influence a man's soul is by an appeal to his reason. Jesus recognises this in His adoption of preaching as the best means for the propagation of the principles of His Kingdom.

But the real problem of verse 1[38] lies in a different direction, and may be discovered in the clause "for thereforth came I forth." What exactly do these words mean? There are two possible interpretations: (1) that the words simply refer to His coming out from Capernaum that morning; (2) that they indicate one, at least, of the supreme reasons for His coming forth from the Father, *i.e.* really for His incarnation. In regard to the first view, Menzies says in his note on the passage: "He had come out in order to continue the work of preaching in the neighbouring towns." This is fairly non-committal, and so is the most of the paragraph. But this sentence and the general tone of the note leads us to infer that he favours the idea of De Wette, who takes the words to mean a reference to coming out of Capernaum. Meyer thinks they refer to His coming out *of the house*; Fritzsche "for to this end came I out (into the desert place)." Now, as the words spoken by Jesus on this occasion may have considerable Christological significance, we require to examine these statements. They all look very satisfactory on the surface, but will they sufficiently account for the situation? Jesus takes His departure from Capernaum while it is yet dark. He

retires to a secluded place and spends hours of this darkness in prayer, leaving His disciples, whom He had but recently called, without a word of explanation. " Let us go into the other towns and villages " indicates quite plainly that He intended the disciples to go along with Him. Why did He thus leave them behind ? Quite evidently He wanted to be away from Capernaum before the crowd gathered in the morning. Why did He wish to avoid the people ? When Simon and those with him tell about the multitudes seeking Him, are we to understand what Jesus said was, " Oh, let us go into the other towns and villages that I may preach there also ; that is why I hurried out of Capernaum—out of the house, and into the desert. It was not to escape the crowd, it was not because of any circumstance in the city—it was only that I was in a hurry to preach elsewhere " ? Would anyone who had not an object to serve accept this as an adequate explanation of the words " for therefore came I forth " ? We are, to some extent, reaching a climax in the situation that is being set before us in this part of the narrative. Great things had been done in Capernaum the day before, much interest and excitement had been awakened. On the morrow, the enthusiasm of the crowd had not abated, but Jesus cannot be found. When He is discovered and told " All men seek thee. Come down into the town, the people are waiting eagerly," it is asking too much to expect us to believe Jesus said, " I am going to preach elsewhere, and that is the reason why I hurried out of Capernaum." Or, if we are forced to accept that, then it will be to recognise that Jesus felt a great necessity laid upon Him of going forward to preach

the Gospel of the Kingdom wherever He could; that He was impelled to scatter the truth over as wide an area as possible, because the time was short and the field was wide. But what force was impelling Him? It must have been because He felt He was thus interpreting the will of the Father —that in thus coming forth He was fulfilling His appointed destiny. Well, that brings us near to the second interpretation of the words "for therefore came I forth," which we shall notice in a moment. It is, however, pertinent to add that if Jesus only implied by these words that preaching was to be His supreme mission, He surely had most abundant opportunities in Capernaum still. He appears to have been in that city but one day, and to have preached only once in the synagogue; there was plenty of opportunity for evangelistic labour still to be carried on in it. He did not require to seek a field in the less sparsely populated country districts. It is quite clear, Jesus recognises that in the call to Capernaum that was now being urged upon Him there was a demand made that did not seem in harmony with His mission in coming into the world. The explanation is not by any means so simple as the foregoing references suggest.

(2) A great many scholars take the words "for therefore came I forth" as expressing the mission that Jesus had appointed to Him in coming into this world. Morrison says: "The Saviour came forth from His invisible condition into the world '*to this end.*' . . . The expression *came I forth* or *came I out* was probably used by our Saviour with intentional indefiniteness." "He came out from the Father" (John 8^{42}, 13^{3}, $16^{27f.}$). Salmon says:

"The last clause of our Lord's answer, *εἰς τοῦτο γαρ ἐξήλθον*, might be understood in a different sense from that given them by St. Luke in his version, *ἐπι τοῦτο ἀπεστάλην*. We might connect the *ἐξήλθον* of Mark 1[35] with the *ἐξήλθον* of verse 38, and might understand our Lord as telling Simon and Andrew that it was with the view of preaching elsewhere that He had left their house in the morning. But since St. Luke regards the verse as addressed to the crowds, it can have no other than its higher meaning" (p. 107). Swete: "The Lord's primary mission was to proclaim the Kingdom (1[14]); dispossessing demoniacs and healing the sick were secondary and in a manner accidental features of His work. . . . *ἐξήλθον* does not refer to His departure from Capernaum (v. 35), but to His mission from the Father (John 8[42], 13[3]); whether it was so understood at the time by the disciples is of course another question" (p. 27). Prof. Curtis, *εἰς τοῦτο γαρ ἐξήλθον*; Luke, *ἀπεστάλην*, "I was sent, and I came forth. Here the meaning seems to be Jesus' mission, *i.e.* to preach. Not even healing is to be allowed to come between Him and His mission to preach a message" (*Notes of Lectures*). Perhaps the earliest commentary we have on these words in Mark is found in the corresponding passage in Luke 4[42f.] We there find that the crowd followed Jesus, and wished Him to stay with them; but "he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent." This, we may be sure, was the interpretation given to the words in the days when the third Gospel was written, and that surely makes the interpretation in the higher sense decisive.

Possibly, however, what has induced certain scholars not to accept this high interpretation is what is involved in it; for if we adopt it, then the inference of the pre-existence of Jesus seems inevitable; and we are not prepared for that here, indeed we hardly expect it in this Gospel. If Jesus "was sent," He must have been sent by some One from somewhere, at some time, to keep to the most general terms. Or if "He came forth," similarly He must have come from somewhere, at some earlier period. So that, if we take Luke's word or Mark's, it really comes to the same thing in the end; underlying this phrase "for therefore came I forth," there is manifestly the idea of pre-existence. We expect that in the latest Gospel, but not in this—the earliest. Yet it does not quite stand alone, even in St. Mark's Gospel. We may refer again to the word εὐδόκησα (1^{11}) at the baptism, and to the fact that many explain the presence of the Aorist as involving also the idea of pre-existence. It may be so, although when dealing with the point we made some observations that, if accepted, would not necessitate the adoption of that view. Here, we have no suggestions to offer that will modify the thought of pre-existence, as we think, contained in the words "for therefore came I forth." It is certainly inconvenient to find such a developed Christological conception here; but there hardly appears to be any other alternative. The course of the narrative, as it has run so far, would not lead us to anticipate such claims upon the part of Jesus; and, certainly, we think Swete is right in hinting that the disciples did not fully understand all this from His words. It would appear, then, that we

may think out the subject of the life of Jesus as best we can, strive by imagination to understand the situation as it is brought before us, endeavour to solve the problem of the working of His mind, but when we have done our best there is still much to explain, to investigate, and to baffle. We strive to discover, *e.g.* when the consciousness of Divine Sonship awakened in Him, and sometimes we fancy it was gradual in its coming, then we recall the baptism scene, and our conclusion must be modified. We are, perhaps, even more assured that the Messianic consciousness was probably a still later development, and we encounter these few words "therefore came I forth," and we are rather perplexed in justifying our theories. Isaiah 61 shows us that Messiah was to be a preacher above everything else, and Jesus claims to be that, and to set it before Him as His chief work. May it not be that the real explanation can be found in suggesting that there were times when even the mind of Jesus had clearer and more distinct flashes concerning Himself, His origin, His work, than at other times? There may have been days when His own life, His powers, His mission were not distinctly apprehended in all their rich and wonderful significance, and when everything was somewhat obscure, and He could only in faith follow the will of the Father. There were other occasions when these mists were uplifted, and His understanding fully comprehended the great purposes of God. Such a time was this, when He realised most vividly that His work was to do the will of God who had sent Him, and that He had come forth as the messenger of the Father: to reveal His love, His mercy, and His goodness in

preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. But Mark and John both touch the same point here. Jesus we believe meant " for therefore came I forth " (from God), and this implies a previous existence with God. It also emphasises the high estimation He had formed of this work of preaching. We are deeply impressed with this revelation of Himself given thus early in His relations with His disciples, but certainly at the time they evidently did not understand.

To sum up in general terms, we may discover in these opening verses of St. Mark's Gospel two striking pictures of Jesus drawn in outline certainly, but still the lines are bold and distinct. After being set apart for Divine Service in baptism, He addressed Himself to the work for which He had been sent, and found an enemy barring the way. The first picture gives us only glimpses of the fierce struggle that took place when Jesus went into the wilderness to fight His battle alone. But He emerged triumphant, through the power of the Spirit that had come upon Him. Strong in the strength received from this first victory, He now applied Himself to the great missionary task which He had set before Him. The temptation was away from the sight of men; this fresh undertaking was in the full blaze of the public eye; and was in one aspect but a different sort of testing, requiring powers and resources other than those exercised in the former trial. For the young man Jesus thus to enter upon this public work of preaching and teaching must have, as already hinted, involved much self-examination and searching of heart. He would put to Himself many questions such as

every sensitive spiritually-minded young preacher would put. There would, however, be this marked difference, that while an ordinary preacher engaged in a period of introspection might be overpowered by a sense of his own unworthiness, this feeling had no parallel in the consciousness of Jesus. It may help us to interpret Him aright at this time to remember that many of His trials, difficulties, and experiences were just such as other men who are alive to the importance of the situation are likely to encounter. Our second picture is found in a congregation dispersing after worship in the synagogue at Capernaum. Unexpectedly they have heard a wonderful preacher who has delivered an amazing sermon—quite different from anything they have heard before. Moreover, they have seen a very unusual deed performed. So, as they pass on their way home, they are filled with astonishment on account of the words and acts of this young preacher. His choice of the preaching office has been abundantly vindicated: "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1^{22}). His word was with power: the power of the fulness of the Spirit.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AND THE MIRACLES

THE Rev. T. H. Wright in an article, "Miracles," in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, writes: "The process of thought and research, both theological and scientific, has led to a position where belief in the actuality, in the career of Jesus, of those remarkable activities and manifestations summed up under the comprehensive and popular term 'miracle,' is made possible, if not inevitable. . . . It is scarcely too much to affirm that belief in these occurrences as vital parts of the Christian revelation is rising, compared with which all previous belief is feeble and superficial." We sincerely hope this is an accurate statement of the present-day attitude, but one wonders what the writer of this article would think of another entitled "Thaumaturgy in the Bible" which appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* (Jan. 1920) under the signature of the Rev. T. R. R. Stebbing, F.R.S. The latter begins with the significant words, "Among so-called miracles none are more impressive than those of recalling the dead to life." The writer proceeds to show that there are nine such cases recorded in Scripture as having been done by five different people. He then affirms: "In five of the cases

it is quite reasonable to suppose that instead of a miracle there was only a misunderstanding." This sentence practically gives us the keynote of what is to follow. The document is written with the undisguised intention of throwing discredit, not to say ridicule, upon all the miracles recorded in the Bible. It is certainly intended to be an appeal to reason, but the frequent employment of the *argumentum ad hominem* considerably diminishes its effectiveness in the furtherance of that intention. One or two sentences by way of example will illustrate the tone of the article throughout: "Elijah uses this unique power (that of calling the dead to life again) to repay the personal kindness of the widow at Zarephath. The same Elijah slays four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, consumes an hundred and two soldiers by fire from heaven, and by prayer prevailed with the same heaven against his own country, so that 'it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.' The inhuman outrage is in fact cited by St. James to prove that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But he is even more eloquent in his reference to Elisha. "This man," he says, "was not only capable of instigating political treason, but out of personal vindictiveness is said to have cursed a flock of 'little children' so that 'there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tore forty-and-two children of them.'" Now it must be admitted, the outlines of these references are true, but the subjects are dealt with in such a manner as to leave an entirely wrong impression upon the readers of the article. There is a mistake which critics often make when occupied

particularly with Biblical subjects. This is the rather common error of interpreting incidents that happened two and a half millenniums ago in terms of the thoughts, sentiments, and ideas of this present century. Moreover, it should not be forgotten when dealing with Old Testament miracles especially, that the records of these come to us from remote times, and are generally very meagre and lacking in details, so that frequently there is not sufficient information to enable us to form a fair and just opinion on the ethics of the various subjects referred to. Mr. Stebbing does not seem to have kept these points sufficiently in mind when writing his article. Prof. Flint in his *Lectures on Divinity* gave utterance to the following striking and important sentences concerning the Bible and its interpretation, which are worthy to be pondered over by all those engaged in Biblical studies and investigations: "Much mischief has resulted from treating the Bible as a text-book of physical science." Mr. Stebbing, of course, does not do so, but he seems to think everybody else does. "Scripture has its own object before it, which is not the manifestation of science, but the declaration of the Kingdom of God. Scripture never makes scientific statements at all." "The Bible is a religious text-book, therefore it is not a text-book on astronomy or geology." "As A RELIGIOUS TEXT-BOOK *the Bible is infallible.*" We are doubtful if articles such as that referred to, and written in the spirit it reveals, help forward any cause. Truth certainly has many sides, but it will be found strongest, most irresistible, when shorn of all bias, prepossession, and sophistry. Mr. Stebbing's contribution, however, reveals that the rationalistic

school is not so ready, as Mr. Wright in his article seems to imagine, to meet the theologian half-way. The article following that of Mr. Stebbing in the same copy of the *Hibbert Journal*, by Miss Constance Maynard, may be regarded as the antidote to his. It is entitled, "Is Christ Alive To-day?" The answer is in the affirmative; and the conclusion is that all things are possible. The following is so appropriate that we may be pardoned for quoting it: "But though the miracles are worked on mind now, there they still are; the ignorant are enlightened, the weak of will are strengthened to act, the morally infectious are cleansed, the materialistic hear the claims of the world invisible, and the totally indifferent begin to stir with a new life. If we look in the right places we may see these things still going on" (*Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1920, p. 372).

Only one or two quotations that appear of importance as introductory to the study of this section of our subject need be given. In a book published by Macless, London, in 1906, several subjects upon which diversity of opinion is held are treated in a series of lectures by distinguished scholars. The title of the book is *Critical Questions*, and it exactly describes the contents. The Bishop of Exeter deals with "The Resurrection: the trustworthiness of the Gospel narrative." The late Dr. Sanday of Oxford gives a contribution on the "Virgin Birth of our Lord." Our extracts are only of a general character: "Nor is there the slightest reason for supposing that the story was ever non-miraculous. The earliest of our Gospels, St. Mark, is not less deeply impregnated with the supernatural than

the other two, and no ingenuity can purge it of miracles."

"Does it help the situation to make a distinction in the kind of miracle? Harnack in *What is Christianity?* says: 'In our present state of knowledge we have become more careful, more hesitating in our judgment. . . . That the lame walked, the blind saw, and the deaf heard, will not be so summarily dismissed as an illusion.' But some of the miracles were wrought upon inanimate matter and are a corporate part of the Gospel story." Again, "But are miracles incredible under the circumstances which the Gospels presuppose? Think of the character of the Christ they picture—Man, yet superman." Again Harnack is referred to, addressing six hundred students, in *What is Christianity?* He says: "We must not try to evade the Gospel by entrenching ourselves behind the miraculous stories related by the Evangelists. If there is anything here which you find unintelligible, put it quietly aside. Perhaps you will have to leave it there for ever; perhaps the meaning will dawn upon you later, and the story assume a significance of which you never dreamt. Perhaps, I may add, the day may come when you will find in the faith of the Incarnation a complete answer to your doubt."

These words are weighty, and they may be of help in the brief study of "Jesus and the Miracles," upon which we are now to be engaged. Fortunately, we are not called upon to enter the lists in a general defence of the credibility of miracles—that, of course, belongs more appropriately to the apologist. Yet we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that the struggle still goes on, and that there are many

people who are not able to see eye to eye with us on this point, or to pronounce our shibboleth. We cannot, therefore, entirely ignore this opposition when considering the contribution that the miracles yield to the Christology of the Earliest Gospel. Because of the attitude of hostility taken up by some scholars, it may be admitted that the evidence on their behalf and the value of their testimony to Jesus have possibly received more prominence than the circumstances of the case deserved. The incidents recorded in Mark 1^{35-45} make it sufficiently clear that Jesus had no desire to be much occupied with this kind of work, and certainly, at first, sought to evade it. He did not wish to establish the kingdom of righteousness through any miraculous operation; His own intention was to do so by preaching. Remembering, then, the prominent place that miracles occupy in this Gospel, and keeping in view the hesitation, at least, that our Lord showed in regard to the performance of such deeds, we might inquire, first of all, whether the somewhat abundant testimony to His success as a miracle worker evidences a change of mind on the part of Jesus respecting the plan of His work? In other words, did outward circumstances so operate in His case as to make it necessary for Him to modify His scheme of life, and adopt a course that His better judgment did not approve of, even as we ourselves often require to do? Well, there is absolutely no reason why we should not answer that question in the affirmative if the evidence available is such as to lead us to that conclusion, and that without affecting our Christological views at all. If, as is quite possible, Jesus had adopted a

plan of operations, say, during the temptation, it would have been no more inflexible, no more absolutely nor irrevocably fixed, than our plans would be under similar conditions. There is no reason for supposing that His methods could not have been modified to suit the changing conditions of the work as these were encountered. We must not, however, assume that it was any sign of weakness or any indication of inadequate foresight, if such a modification actually did take place. The reluctance of Jesus to enter upon thaumaturgic performances was no doubt due to the desire to appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. After all, His work was moral and spiritual, and to produce extraordinary physical effects might not have substantially helped forward His mission. Miracles must, in the mind of Jesus, take a secondary place; and they ought to have no higher place still. They can be best regarded as only incidents in His great work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. He may have changed His methods to some extent when He discovered how difficult it was to make a deep and lasting impression upon the people by the spoken word: even He could only work upon the material that came to Him through those means that the particular circumstances of the case necessitated. One other consideration that may have affected the attitude of Jesus in this respect was the appeal that distress made to His compassion. Possibly He knew little of the world outside His own particular neighbourhood before He entered upon His public ministry. The distress, suffering, and sorrow that thrust themselves upon His attention now, made an appeal that was irresistible. He could

not turn a deaf ear even to the impudent leper who thrust himself upon the company (Mark $1^{40ff.}$), but sent him away healed. One is entitled to say in regard to this point, that the warmth of His love overcame the coolness of His judgment; and who will regret that it was so? What other result could be expected when we remember that love was His inspiring motive all the time? He realised He had the power to help; He saw the great need for His assistance; possibly, too, He recognised it was not the most desirable way of obtaining His supreme object, nor likely to be productive of the best kind of faith, but "he had compassion on the multitude." Still, we must remember that most certainly in the earlier stages of His ministry, Jesus did not regard the performance of miracles as of supreme importance.

Nevertheless, their evidential value is not to be despised, and it was not neglected even by Jesus Himself. This may be inferred from several passages in the fourth Gospel. "Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" (10^{32}). "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (15^{24}). This view also receives support from the Synoptists, Matthew and Luke. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. $11^{21ff.}$; parallel Luke 10^{13}). Commenting on John 5^{36-37}, Prof. H. A. A. Kennedy pointed out

that "this testimony of His works was an unusual New Testament standpoint—a deliberate appeal to the works which He did. The passage gives a glimpse of what happened in the Early Church. We see how ἔργα were exalted above the person and character of Jesus Christ. They would be raised up to a unique place on their own account, and evidently the whole claim of Jesus would depend upon what He had done." Now, it could not be accurately said that St. Mark exalts the works above the person and character of Jesus, yet it is very instructive to notice the number of miracles he records and the interest he evidently manifests in them. His Gospel, as we know, is the briefest, yet he relates the performance of some twenty of these "works," besides quite a number of general references implying that similar deeds had been done at various places. The prominence given to these ἔργα by Mark may be the incipient stage of that process referred to by Prof. Kennedy, and it would indicate that it came into the Church at a very early period; or it may rather be, so far as Mark is concerned, and we think it is, his method of endeavouring to interpret the person and character of Jesus Christ. St. Peter is, of course, our witness here, and he cannot banish from his memory the effect that was produced upon him and the other disciples by the works of our Lord. We are not surprised at that, for certainly in the same circumstances we would have been similarly impressed. In this aspect of the ministry of Jesus the disciples see a power behind such deeds that they cannot account for by any ordinary human standard, and so, for the moment, we may say they

interpret their Master as more than human. Or we may put it thus: these works lead them to the conclusion that Jesus possessed a power that they could not explain from human experience.

Keeping these general observations in our mind, we may now proceed to a more detailed consideration of some of the miracles, so that we may discover the influence they had in the development of the Christology of the Earliest Gospel.

In the form for Solemnisation of Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 291), the following sentence is found in reference to marriage: "which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with His presence, and *first miracle* that He wrought, in Cana of Galilee." The Euchologion of the Scottish Church Service Society has adopted practically the same words—"matrimony which is a holy estate . . . which was beautified and adorned by our Lord's gracious presence, and first miracle, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee" (p. 328). These statements are, no doubt, based upon John 2^{11}: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." Now it would be interesting to know which was actually the first miracle that Jesus performed. St. John here specifically claims that it was the one which was wrought at Cana, and which we regard as one of the nature miracles. St. Mark clearly leaves the impression that the first miracle was that of healing the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum ($1^{23ff.}$). The incidents recorded in 1^{21-34} are evidently so closely connected as to suggest that they all happened on one day—the

first Sabbath that Jesus spent in Capernaum after having entered upon His public ministry. Of course, there is the possibility that John might not have regarded this as a miracle; but we do not need to enter into that. His Gospel generally differs so materially from the others as to incline us to prefer the narrative recorded by St. Mark as more likely to present the earliest view of Jesus at work. We find, therefore, that He began at first to use His extraordinary powers to heal the distressed and diseased, and that right from the beginning of His ministry. We know that neither His mother nor His brethren in the earliest period believed on Him (Mark 3^{21}). Yet the situation at Cana indicates that Mary did expect something extraordinary to happen. Moreover, it seems unlikely that Jesus would have performed such a miracle at the very commencement of His public work in view of what we have seen already of the secondary place that He designed miracles to occupy. For these reasons, we must with all respect to the Prayer Book place the miracle at Cana later in the ministry of Jesus. Prof. H. A. A. Kennedy in his lectures on the *Johannine Problems* points out "the miracle at Cana contradicts deliberately the story of the temptation, which shows Jesus avoids any *exhibition* that would advance His Messianic claims." He further indicates that "many modern interpreters regard this incident as chiefly symbolical. They think of the marriage feast as a symbol of the new religious joy that came into the world with Jesus (Mark 2^{18-22}; Matt. 22^{2}, $25^{1ff.}$)." Yet, Prof. Kennedy warns against any exaggeration of such a system of interpretation, carefully remarking that

"we are by no means convinced that all the material is ideal history; there is a genuine historical nucleus." Whatever that genuine nucleus may be, we are safe in consigning it to a later period than those incidents recorded by St. Mark as taking place on the first Sabbath Jesus spent at Capernaum. Very probably we are on sure enough ground in regarding the cure of the man with an unclean spirit (Mark $1^{23ff.}$) as truly the first miracle wrought by our Lord. We need hardly dwell upon the great significance of such an act being performed in such a place. It will, however, be instructive to reflect that the primary instance of the manifestation of this extraordinary power took place in connection with Divine worship in God's house, and may be understood, to some extent, as the first outcome of the preaching of Jesus. Nor do we think we are going too far in affirming that there was here, in a certain aspect, a solemn dedication, although not in any formal or outward manner, of this power to the glory of God and to the service of suffering humanity.

The subject of demonology as it is brought before us so prominently and so early in this Gospel is confessedly difficult. It has received a considerable amount of attention at the hands of many investigators, and articles will be found in all the principal dictionaries and encyclopædias dealing with it extensively. Those by Edersheim in chapters xiv. and xxv., vol. i., of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, and the "Excursus on the Demons of the Synoptic Gospels," by Menzies, in his *Earliest Gospel* (p. 68), are particularly helpful and instructive. We are not here called upon to enter into any critical or historical investigation of the nature of

the disease; our object is to show how Jesus met and conquered it. We may be permitted to say, however, that if the malady appears to us to be somewhat mysterious, it certainly seems to have been very widespread in N.T. times. At Capernaum we are informed (Mark 1^{34}) that our Lord "cast out many devils." This is also inferable from 3^{11}, as well as from the taunt of the scribes that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils (3^{22}). Jesus specially gave the Twelve power over "unclean spirits." The disorder sometimes seemed to be of the nature of a physical disability, as in 9^{17}, where the possessed person is dumb. Edersheim points out also that it was often of a temporary or intermittent character; and that was possibly the case with the first instance in the synagogue at Capernaum. Perhaps the cases where mental derangement is suggested are the most numerous.

But whatever was the root cause of the disease, or its character in any particular case, we find that Jesus was in all instances able to relieve the distressed. How He arrived at the knowledge of the possession of this power is not explained; it seems to have come to Him just as the occasion arose. Exorcism was, of course, comparatively common among the Jews before the time of Jesus. Indeed some of them believed that the greatest and most successful exorcist—the very Grand Master of the craft—had been Solomon, and his name was frequently used in the incantations that were uttered by the Jews when performing exorcisms. Acts 19^{13} shows that the name of Jesus was similarly employed by them at a later period. That they actually did perform such exorcisms is a perfectly fair inference from Luke 11^{19},

which corresponds with Mark $3^{22ff.}$: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges." The power of exorcism was one of the gifts claimed as permanent by the Early Church, and in the third century the office of exorcist was specially instituted. Perhaps in the Roman Catholic Church this claim has never been relinquished, and the writer is acquainted with one place in Ireland where the more ignorant of the peasantry still believed the priest possessed this power of exorcism. It was rather significant, however, that there were few, if any, admitted cases of demoniacal possession, and nobody had ever actually seen his reverence exercising the power.

The manner of exorcism practised among the Jews must have been different from that which was followed by Jesus. He always spoke directly to the unclean spirit in such tones of authority that invariably it must obey. He employed no incantations, invoked no other name nor power. He gave the command to the spirit by right of His own authority. That clearly is the import of 1^{27}: "What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." Mark here, true to the note he has already sounded, finds the power of Jesus set forth in a conspicuous way by this authority which He can exercise over unclean spirits.

This view of the situation is strengthened when we consider the particular case of healing recorded in Mark 5^{1-20}, the only instance in which the Evangelist furnishes details. The healing of this

maniac at Gerasa or Gadara or Gergesa, for there are differences of opinion as to the exact locality, is told by our Evangelist in a manner that is exceedingly impressive and graphic. He seems to have been a lonely, fierce, and untamable individual possessed of great strength. This physical strength is a very common feature even in modern cases of mania. This man, who dwelt among the tombs and in the mountains, was so powerful, that in the words of Mark 5^3 "no man could bind him, no, not with chains." Conceive of such a figure in all the wildness and fierceness of his uncontrolled nature, in possession of physical force much beyond what was ordinary—a terror to the whole district on account of his ferocity, yet "when he saw Jesus afar off he ran and worshipped him" (5^6). We are justified in concluding that the power of Jesus is even more pronounced than we had expected from $1^{23ff.}$, for here space seems to be annihilated: the influence of the Spirit of Christ overleaps the distance separating Him from this afflicted person and at once subdues the demon within him. It is true the unclean spirit sets up the same protest as before against any interference with it on the part of Jesus, and, what is confusing enough, even invokes the name of God against any disturbance. Jesus is represented as having some colloquy with the spirit, and grants its request to enter into the swine: all which raises points of peculiar difficulty. But whether these difficulties can be solved or not, they in no way affect the obvious purpose of the Evangelist, which is not to propose enigmas for future scholars, but to show that the calm word of authority spoken by our Lord was able to tame even the wildest

spirit with which He came into contact. Assuming, and the narrative leaves this impression, that the man was a fierce and powerful maniac, evidently with suicidal and homicidal tendencies, whose malady was of long standing and whose ferocity was well known, few men would care to-day to meet such a one unarmed, and with practically no physical powers of defence; yet evidently Jesus did so without the slightest trace of fear. And it is strange that as soon as the man came within the radius of the influence of our Lord, he quietly prostrates himself (not, of course, with the ordinary sense of worship) before Him. "Who can minister to a mind diseased?" Why, here is the answer. Even our modern experience will corroborate that there is nothing more hopeless, and if the tendency be towards violence, nothing more dangerous, because so powerful, than such a wild creature, and yet at the word of Jesus the mania, or the devil, or whatever it was that possessed the man, departs, and he comes to his right mind. It hardly seems possible to conceive of a more complete exercise of power over the mind and spirit than this case of healing furnishes. We shall do well not only to emphasise that, but to take care not to undervalue it, for it appears to be the main point; and was, perhaps, the very object Peter and Mark had before them in preserving the details of this story. The other difficulties that arise, the ethics involved in the wanton destruction of property, clearly did not concern the Evangelist, and need not therefore unduly worry us.

Nor is this impression lessened in the least by our knowledge that others professed to have power to

exorcise evil spirits. What others could do presumably without any claim to miraculous power, would require certainly no miraculous power on the part of Jesus for its performance. Of course, it is obvious that everybody among the Jews did not claim to have this gift, and it is still more likely that those who did claim it, often did not prove their possession of it by their ability to exorcise. Nevertheless, there is a difference, as we have seen, in His methods as compared with theirs. The case we have just been considering, it is to be observed, possesses this peculiar feature, that others had tried to tame the demoniac and had failed. St. Mark is careful to say (5^4) "neither could any man tame him." Jesus was not only unique in His methods of working, but His power was greater than any other man's: this is shown by His ability to heal in instances in which they failed. This is also true of the dumb spirit recorded in $9^{17ff.}$, for although their Master had given the disciples power over unclean spirits (6^7), yet in this case they failed utterly. Now, it is a matter of small importance whether we say such works were miracles or not, so far as Jesus was concerned. They certainly bear testimony to the possession of power that was not enjoyed by any other man of that time, so far as is now known. That this power was personal to Jesus is seen from the fact that He delegated it to others, as has been just noticed, but also that sometimes this delegated power failed. Again we conclude, the effect of such works left upon the minds of the disciples and those who were familiar with the doings of Jesus, would be to lead them to ascribe to Him powers which no other man possessed

in the same degree or extent; and that is only stating the result in its lowest possible form. Supposing we agree that in this work of exorcism we are but on the borderland of the miraculous, what ensues? Only this, that it is difficult to draw the line between what may be rightly regarded as a miracle and what may not be so regarded in the works of Jesus. This line can only be, like the equator, an imaginary one. There can be no doubt whatever that these extraordinary deeds performed by Him were exercising a most powerful impression upon the minds of the disciples and preparing them for the reception of the fuller revelation of His personality that was approaching.

The second instance of an extraordinary exhibition of the power of Jesus recorded by St. Mark ($1^{30f.}$) is of quite a different character, and is described only in a couple of verses. It is the healing of Peter's wife's mother. St. Luke in his parallel account in $4^{38ff.}$ differs in a few particulars from the other Synoptists, and these differences are interesting to study. Mark and Matthew tell us Jesus took hold of the woman's hand as if to suggest that His cooling touch, or at any rate the communication of some subtle influence, had drawn the fever away. Luke states that Jesus stood over her and rebuked the fever, using the same word, ἐπετίμησεν, as is found in relation to cases of exorcism of evil spirits. It is the use of this word that induces W. O. Oesterley, in his article in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, to state (p. 441): "Fever would also appear to have been regarded as a sign of possession, for Christ is said to 'rebuke' (ἐπετίμησεν) the fever, the identical word which is frequently used by Him

when addressing demons, *e.g.* in next verse but one in the passage in question (Luke 4^{41})." Salmon in *The Human Element in the Gospel* appears to agree. "St. Luke's phrase," he says, "however, ἐπετίμησεν τῷ πυρετῷ, would seem to indicate that he regarded the disease as caused by the working of a malignant spiritual being." Plummer, however, on Luke (*International Critical Commentary*) 4^{39}, maintains that "the ἐπετίμησεν of verse 35 does not show that the use of the same word here is meant to imply that the fever is regarded as a personal agent." Prof. Souter in his *Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* gives the import of the verb ἐπιτιμάω as "I rebuke, chide, censure." Possibly we are not called upon to force the meaning of this word in Luke, but may assume that Jesus said something in a chiding manner as if addressing the fever. We sometimes make such remarks ourselves under similar conditions, without ever implying that the object addressed understands us, still less with the idea that there is a spirit behind it. In any case, if Luke had really meant that Jesus rebuked the demon which was the cause of the fever, being a medical man we expect he would have said so. We cannot, of course, be certain as to how far medical science was developed at this time in such subjects as fever, epilepsy, etc., but it is hardly supposable that a trained physician with Luke's intellectual capacity would, even in those days, have believed that fever was caused by an evil spirit. Taking everything into consideration, we prefer the simple account as we find it in Mark's Gospel, and except in regard to the point referred to just now, there is no important discrepancy

between him and Luke. The tale as told in the Earliest Gospel is most probable, and we may be sure Peter would have remembered every particular. After the synagogue service, Jesus and the disciples who were with Him resorted to Simon's house, no doubt to obtain hospitality. His wife's mother had probably been taken suddenly ill with a fever common to the district. We are inclined to believe that even Peter did not know of this, otherwise he would surely have told Jesus sooner, so that other arrangements could have been made for His entertainment. It is only when they get to the house that Jesus is informed of the woman's illness, and He went in, and standing over her, as He must have done seeing she was lying on her mattress bed, He took hold of her hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her. There is no doubt at all about the cure, for she was able immediately to set about her household duties and to minister to their physical comfort. It is this circumstance that seems to have made the greatest impression upon those interested: it assured them that the cure was immediate and perfectly effective. It is very possible they would be familiar with the kind of fever, and were evidently astonished at her speedy recovery. In reviewing the whole situation, we are satisfied this was a case of the healing of a disease that was well known, and the cure was performed in such a way as to arrest attention. It did more than that, because as soon as the sun was set, when the Sabbath was past, and the cool of the evening had come, "they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils" (1^{32}). That was perhaps the best

testimony of their faith in the healing work that Jesus had already done. It is noticeable that the Evangelist in the verse just now quoted discriminates between the casting out of devils and the curing of those who were diseased. He does not appear to have regarded the cure of Peter's wife's mother as one of exorcism, even of a peculiar kind.

We do not feel it is necessary, indeed it is not possible, to enter into a detailed criticism of the various miracles recorded by St. Mark. There are specimens of various diseases that might have been regarded as practically incurable and which were at once healed through the touch or word of Jesus: a confirmed case of leprosy ($1^{40ff.}$); an impotent-palsied man ($2^{3ff.}$); woman with an issue of blood ($5^{25ff.}$); blind man at Bethsaida ($8^{22ff.}$); blind Bartimæus ($10^{46ff.}$)—these all show the power that our Lord exercised over ailments of various kinds. And while we cannot say these cases were all in themselves incurable, yet by reason of their long standing in some instances, it would appear that the afflicted were hopeless of receiving any other relief except what might be in the power of Jesus to give. Indeed these may all be taken as specimens of His work of mercy in respect of healing. We need not suppose even that St. Mark with his long list of miracles details fully all that Jesus performed, and probably the list would not even be completed by adding to it those which are mentioned in the other Gospels. As we have not a full report of the preaching of Jesus, no more have we a quite complete account of His deeds. There were probably some that were not recorded (John 21^{25}).

It is really hopeless to endeavour to erect a

standard by which we shall be able to judge the relative difficulty of the particular kinds of miracles. So far as our present-day knowledge and experience go, it would seem to be as difficult to cure a raving lunatic with a word, as it would be to heal a persistent case of hæmorrhage through the touch of one's clothes, *et vice versa*; and it would also be as easy to cure a cancer with a touch, as to restore sight to a blind man by using saliva as an ointment. The fact is, all these, from the modern standpoint, appear equally impossible of accomplishment. Yet people have been occasionally in the habit of estimating certain miracles as more difficult to perform than others. There are some critics ready to accept particular miracles because they appear more susceptible of an explanation, and this commonly means because they are more susceptible of being explained away. That susceptibility, it is just to say, is imported into the situation by such critics themselves. There is no suggestion of it found in the New Testament narratives. The Gospels are impregnated with the supernatural, and "no ingenuity can purge them of miracles." There is no hint of any difficulty in their performance in the sacred narrative. There was one case certainly in which the disciples failed, but their failure appears to have been due to something lacking in themselves. So far as Jesus is concerned, there is no hint that any one case of healing made greater demand upon His power than another. He was equal to every call that was made upon Him.

Still, it is probably true that while what has been just now stated would not be denied, there are reverent and devoted Christian people who actually

regard raising the dead as the supreme miracle of all, and as making the greatest possible demand upon the powers of our Lord. We must here again refer to Rev. T. R. R. Stebbing's article in the *Hibbert Journal* (Jan. 1920). For convenience we give most of the quotation again: "Among so-called miracles none are more impressive than those of recalling the dead to life." There are nine cases in the Bible of such miracles. The writer goes on to say: "In five of the cases it is quite reasonable to suppose that instead of a miracle there was only a misunderstanding. This would apply to the child of the Zidonian woman restored by Elijah, to the Shunamite's son revived by Elisha, to the daughter of Jairus, of whom Jesus Himself said 'the maid is not dead, but sleepeth' (Matt. 9^{24})." It is with this instance we now propose to deal; the words quoted from St. Matthew are also found in St. Mark 5^{39}. The details of this miracle in the Gospel we are studying are found in $5^{22\text{-}24,\ 35\text{-}43}$. Mr. Stebbing never takes up a consideration of the facts further; the literal words of Jesus are evidently enough for him—"the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," and not another word is written regarding the case. In John 11^{11} Jesus says: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth"—and it is quite clear that He means Lazarus is dead. One wonders why Mr. Stebbing did not dispose of this latter miracle in the same way as he does the raising of the daughter of Jairus! He certainly gives some consideration to the raising of Lazarus, and submits it to some little examination. But why so, since Jesus says of them both they are sleeping? Of course our Lord eventually had to inform His disciples plainly that

Lazarus was dead; while in the other case the position is quite the reverse—the people insist that the damsel is dead, but Jesus affirms she is sleeping. Was not this custom of speaking of a person who was dead as being asleep a *usus loquendi* on the part of Jesus, which became wedded to the speech of the Christians of that generation (1 Thess. 5^{10}, $4^{13f.}$; 1 Cor. $15^{18, 20}$; Acts 13^{36}, 7^{60})? It is quite true that in Mark 5^{39} the word is *κἀθευδει*, and in John 11^{11} it is *κεκοιμηται*. In all the other references given it is some form of the latter word that is used, except in 1 Thess. 5^{10}, where we find *καθεύδω*. This is rather interesting, because in the Epistle a few verses earlier the author uses *κοιμάω*, the inference being that he regarded these words as synonyms. Souter in his *Lexicon* assigns practically the same meaning to both words: "*κἀθεύδω*, I am sleeping (asleep); I sleep, *κοιμάομαι*, I fall asleep, I am asleep, sometimes of the 'sleep of death' (*e.g.* Matt. 27^{52})." It is instructive to find this conception of death as a sleep so frequent in Paul, and bearing in mind Mark's intercourse with the Apostle, we expect some similarities of phrase and expression—we have noticed some of these already. Liddell and Scott agree with Souter, adding the note after *κἀθεύδω*, "according to Schlewsner in New Testament of sleep of death like *κοιμᾶσθαι*, but all the instances prove the reverse, except 1 Thess. 5^{10}." The whole question is of considerable importance, because, as this is the only miracle of its kind in Mark, certain critics appear to think it should be somehow interpreted as, or reduced to, an ordinary case of healing. And so we find the greatest possible emphasis laid upon the *ipsissima verba* employed by Jesus on this occasion—

"the maid is not dead, but sleepeth"—and it is insisted that He acted all through as if she was still alive. This is the line of interpretation taken up by Menzies on the passage, and his note is not so helpful as we could desire. Yet it seems impossible to eliminate the miraculous here. We are bound to ask how Jesus knew that the maiden was not dead. When He said so, it does not appear He had seen her or examined her in any way. It is either an instance of miraculous knowledge or one of miraculous power, and the extreme radical critics place themselves, we think, on the horns of this dilemma. We are not at all anxious as to which point they select for their impaling, for they are no more eager to ascribe miraculous foreknowledge to Jesus than miraculous power. If, however, they rejoin that His statement was only a good guess, then we answer, He might have guessed wrongly, and the people who saw the child were likely to be right. Perhaps in connection with this miracle, if it be so regarded, verse 43 has not received the attention that it deserves, and it is possible that if we could get a satisfactory explanation of it we might have some light thrown upon the work itself. "And he charged them strictly that no man should know it: and he commanded that something should be given her to eat." (1) Why did Jesus give such strict injunctions that nothing should be said about what had happened in the inner room where this child was lying? Menzies answers that by saying: "He does not want to be spoken of as one who is able to raise the dead." That may be quite a good suggestion, but it hardly seems to be supported by what follows. In the next paragraph he says: "Here (St. Mark's account) the child is

not really dead, but only apparently dead." If this latter be correct, what need was there for Jesus to fear being spoken of as one who is able to raise the dead? If the girl was only apparently dead, He had but to say to the friends when she was restored, "It was as I judged, she was not really dead, but only in a temporary swoon, from which I have revived her." That would surely have been much more effective in counteracting any idea the people had formed as to her being dead. Let us consider the evidence we have in Mark only. A ruler of the synagogue in which Jesus had more or less frequently preached, and in which He had done His first extraordinary work, has a daughter who is taken very ill. He hears that Jesus has returned to Capernaum, where the latter's power to cure divers diseases is already well known. The ruler decides to appeal to this Man who has so marvellously helped others in similar straits. When he left home his daughter was on the point of death. We do not think a father would make any mistake about that. Because of delays of one kind and another, mentioned in the Gospel narrative, and possibly because Jesus does not appear to be in any great hurry, herein reminding us of the case of Lazarus, while the procession is on the way to the ruler's house a message comes to say that the child is dead. Presumably it would come from some person in authority, who would know the exact position of affairs. The father does not seem at all surprised. But what does Jesus do or say? Overhearing the message that has just been delivered, He addresses the stricken parent in these words: "Be not afraid, only believe" (5^{36}). Luke adds: "and she shall be saved." Matthew does

not report this part of the story. Are we not justified in inferring from Luke's additional remark just quoted, that at the time of writing his Gospel it was understood the child was dead? However that may be, we are safe in affirming that if the girl was not really dead and Jesus knew it, now was the time to state it very plainly, for He must have known very well that the father believed his child was dead, and He allowed him to continue in that belief. Undoubtedly the natural thing, that which the sympathy of Jesus would have dictated Him to say, was, "she is not dead, she is only in a swoon, she is really sleeping." This would have given the man's faith some ground to work upon. As it was, the appeal was made to him to believe and hope against what seemed to him an absolute certainty. It surely was gratuitous torture that we would not expect Jesus to practise, to keep the father in suspense even for a short period, when by a word He could have eased the effect of the message which this man had just received! And when they come to the house, how does the situation develop? We need not be further occupied with the words Jesus spoke to the multitude—"the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth"—except to ask if it is meant that this was only an ordinary sleep. And are we to assume all the people gathered in the house could not recognise it as such? It must be borne in mind that sepulture followed very closely upon death in the East, and the bystanders would probably have their own methods of recognising death. If it is, however, assumed that Jesus meant by the words quoted that the girl was in a swoon, or undergoing a period of suspended animation, it is most pertinent to inquire if *κἀθεύδω*

is ever used in that sense? Certainly not in the New Testament. The word swoon only occurs in Lam. $2^{11, 12}$, where the LXX uses in the eleventh verse ἐκλείπω, and in the following verse ἐκλύω, to translate the Hebrew עָטַף. The more common word in N.T. for a fainting-fit seems to be ἐκλύω, and our idea of swoon does not appear to be found there. Moreover, if this was only an ordinary case of healing, why were so great precautions for secrecy taken? Only the favourite disciples, Peter, James, and John, with the parents of the child, were permitted to enter the room where she was lying, and they were enjoined strictly not to speak about the matter. Jesus, let us remember, had just recently restored in a somewhat extraordinary manner the woman afflicted with an "issue of blood"; this was done in the most public manner possible. We know also He had wrought other notable deeds in and around Capernaum which had created very great astonishment and popular excitement. Wherein did this case of the daughter of Jairus differ that so much secrecy was required? It is apparent that the difference could not be in any of the outward circumstances, and that it must have been in the nature of the work itself. There seems only one reasonable and adequate explanation, and it is that this "work" was differentiated from all other cases of healing yet done in Capernaum, by the fact that the child was really dead; and Jesus, foreseeing the very great excitement that would follow upon the publicity of the performance of such a wonderful work, urged all concerned to keep the matter secret. And here comes in the valuable hint of Prof. Menzies, for it is evident that

at this juncture " He does not want to be spoken of as one who is able to raise the dead." He Himself seems at once to have departed from the house without observation. But in doing so, was He not actually confirming the impression these people had formed ? At first they would be sure to think that He had departed from the house so quietly because He had found out that they were right regarding the child, and that she was really dead ; afterwards, when they discovered she was alive and well, it is difficult to imagine what they would think. But is there any need to strain the point further ? It appears, taking a careful and unbiassed view of the situation, that this child was really dead, and Jesus brought her to life again. Still, supposing she was not, that she was, in the words of her father, " at the point of death," and had fallen into a comatose condition, does that remove the idea of the miraculous ? We certainly do not think so. Immediately to restore one who was so plainly near to death is hardly less wonderful than to revive one already dead. Really, when such works lie beyond the region of our experience, we cannot very well discriminate between relative difficulties in their performance.

(2) The second point worthy of observation and consideration in verse 43 is, that Jesus " commanded that something should be given her to eat." Many scholars believe that this was done by Him to prove that the child was really restored. Morrison points out the improbability of that, but does he catch the point himself ? He says : " He (Jesus) would enter at once into the circle of the little damsel's self-consciousness and understand how sweet to her

young fresh appetite, after the long abstinence to which she had been subjected in her illness, would be 'something to eat.' Even the child's mother was not so motherly as Jesus." But we do not know that the child had been subjected to a long period of abstinence. Menzies explains this reference thus: "Before leaving the house He (Jesus) says something about her being fed, giving, perhaps, some directions as to her diet, as a wise physician should." It is questionable if we should try to make very much out of this small incident. It is possible, as Menzies suggests, that Jesus gave "some directions as to her diet," but it may be doubted very much if that is what we are to understand from the words, "and he commanded that something should be given her to eat." The situation was, we think, simply this. The father and mother were so upset by the experience through which they had now passed, that they forgot everything else, even the pressing needs of their daughter, who had now been so wonderfully restored to them. She was hungry, perhaps, much exhausted by her sickness, no doubt, and her immediate need was something to sustain and nourish her. The only one to think of these things was Jesus, because He is the only person in the house who is now cool and collected. He alone has Himself absolutely under control. All the others were incapacitated for the time by the unique experience which had befallen them. His words were intended to call them back to the realities of the situation, so that the physical needs of the child should be attended to immediately.

On a review of the evidence in this case, and taking the whole circumstances into account, we

feel this was a most wonderful intervention of the power of Jesus. The impression made upon Peter, James, and John must have been exceedingly great, and the problem which, no doubt, had already started in their minds concerning their Master would become more insistent, yet even more inexplicable—"Who is this?"

There are three miracles recorded by St. Mark that present peculiar difficulties. They are: "The stilling of the tempest" ($4^{37ff.}$), "Christ walking on the water" ($6^{49ff.}$), and "the cursing of the fig-tree" ($11^{12ff.}$). It is not only the rationalistic critics who take exception to these, but other Christian people experience a good deal of trouble in deciding what attitude to adopt regarding them. The casting out of devils and the healing of the sick they can accept, because in a measure such miracles do not run so directly in the teeth of the laws of nature as we understand them. But those mentioned above seem to be a direct contradiction of such laws, quite against all human experience of nature's working, and one of them especially appears to be unworthy of the mission of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt these objections are very formidable, and cannot be easily set aside. It may be observed, however, that so far as the argument as to the contradiction of natural laws is concerned, it is directed equally against anything that we would regard as miraculous. It seems just as violent a breach of the uniformity of nature to soothe a raving maniac with a word, as to calm the raging of a storm by the same agency. If the power to perform miracles is allowed at all in the case of Jesus, it certainly is a very difficult thing to limit it in any

given direction. But are we certain we have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the resources of our Lord to enable us to do so? It may also be questioned whether we have even an adequate knowledge of nature, and of the relation of Jesus to it. The writer has been through the experience of a storm at sea during the night—not so very dissimilar from the account given in this Gospel (4^{37}), with the very decided difference that he was in a larger and much more comfortable vessel, and there was therefore comparatively little danger. But the experience makes it exceedingly difficult to imagine how the wind could have been arrested in its onward rush by a word; or the sea made quiet by a command as recorded in $4^{37ff.}$ And this difficulty is increased when, as in these days, we know what is the cause of the wind—varying gradients of atmospheric pressure—and that it is itself the most common cause of a tempestuous sea. Nature, science, and experience are against two of these three "nature miracles" recorded in this Gospel, and the testimony of these three witnesses is very powerful.

Menzies writing on $4^{37ff.}$ says: "Comment can add nothing to these verses; they tell their own story in the shortest and most graphic way." We think he is scarcely quite fair to the disciples in his comments. Is it just to say they are represented as being poor sailors and frightened by a squall? The fair interpretation surely is, that they were good sailors, but this was such an unparalleled tempest that they had given up hope. His note on the passage is helpful, but, we believe, is marred to some extent by the concluding sentence: "Mark no

doubt means to represent Jesus as having had power over the wind and waves, but that power is not claimed by Jesus Himself; it belongs to the interpretation afterwards put on His words and demeanour." If that is so, then we wish to know what Jesus meant when "he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." This was more than a little byplay on the part of our Lord; it really involved a claim to this very power. We are entitled to believe He meant what He said when He spoke to the wind and the waves on this occasion: and if He did, implicitly although not explicitly, He asserted His right to require obedience from these elements. The following extracts from Salmon (*The Human Element*, etc.) and Swete (*Commentary on St. Mark*) are so appropriate for the development of our main subject, that we crave indulgence for quoting them. "This miracle," says the former, "has an important place in the history of the progressive steps by which Jesus revealed His power to His disciples. Their attention was first caught by His power over demoniacs; then St. Luke 4^{39} tells how He rebuked a fever and it departed; here we read that inanimate objects were obedient to His command, and that when He rebuked the winds and the waves they submitted" (pp. 266–267). "This miracle," says Swete, "comes home to the Apostles above any that they had witnessed. It touched them personally; they had been delivered by it from imminent peril. It appealed to them as men used to the navigation of the Lake. Thus it throws a new and awful light on the Person with whom they daily associated" (pp. 90–99).

One is much inclined to think these two paragraphs strike the right note, and indeed reveal the purpose, if we might say so, of the miracles recorded in Mark $4^{37ff.}$ and $6^{49ff.}$, for they are somewhat similar in their character. Such miracles were, without doubt, necessary experiences and influences in the educational development of the disciples. They had already watched several performances of a strange character that had caused them to marvel; but others had been chiefly the interested parties. Now, they had had an example of the power of Jesus that would appeal to themselves particularly. Nearly all the company of disciples were fishermen, and, therefore, familiar with boating on the Sea of Galilee. Could, then, a better means have been conceived of bringing home a personal lesson to them? They were being approached in a way that they knew, and could, consequently, understand. No others knew better than they the fierceness and force of such a gale upon the Sea of Galilee, so that none was likely to be better able to appreciate the power that would be necessary to subdue the storm and to cause the waves to sink to sleep. Small wonder, indeed, that these men were filled with amazement.

We have coupled these two miracles together because they are not only of the same character, but also because it is indisputable that the Person who could thus calm the winds, and bring the waves into subjection, could just as easily walk upon the water. But the latter miracle has been particularly attacked by Paulus and Strauss. Salmon deals with their positions in his criticism of the miracle of Christ walking on the sea, and Edersheim has a page

or two in answer to them when occupied with both miracles. Any further criticism of the attitude of Paulus is here unnecessary, for, as Prof. Marcus Dods has remarked, his method "did not get any general credence." "It would make the writers of the Gospels," he says further, "as silly, uncritical, gullible persons not to be depended upon." Strauss was a more formidable opponent to the generally accepted position, and possibly has still some faithful followers. His theory was that a great deal, if not all, the miraculous material in the Gospels was mythical. "But by this he does not mean merely the accretion of the marvellous, but rather the conscious representation in symbol or in supposed fact" (Dods' *Lectures*). The Gospel narrative represents as facts what is true of ideas. But what is untrue of fact is true of idea, and the fact is given for sake of the idea. The mythological and symbolical interpretation seem with Strauss to join hands. He says: "The entrance to the Gospel history was through the ornamented door of myth, and the exit was the same." The most of the Gospel narrative, he alleges, is unhistorical. The question is, Can his main position be established? If so, then all miracles may be rejected. (1) Was the age of the Gospels such an uncritical and mythological one as Strauss affirms and able scholars, such as Prof. Marcus Dods, deny? There is very little about the Gospels to suggest that the writers were easily imposed upon or readily deceived. If Acts $1^{15\text{-}26}$ may be regarded as reliable, it shows that, on the contrary, the Apostles were extremely careful in selecting a successor to Judas—and only a person who had been an eyewitness of the facts in

the public ministry of Jesus was considered eligible. There is a ring of honesty and carefulness in the whole proceedings which draws out our faith. Similarly, the atmosphere of the Synoptics does not suggest an uncritical mind on the part of the disciples, or that they were men easily to be imposed upon. We need only recall how frequently their want of faith and their persistent unbelief are rebuked by Jesus. Perhaps Strauss would have said this was but the varnish, put on to make the narrative appear more attractive and artistic. Even in that suggestion, is there not the hint of a higher literary art, and a deeper moral duplicity than the disciples evidently possessed? (2) Time is required for a myth to grow and flourish. But is there sufficient time in this case? It hardly seems so in view of the position now taken up by Harnack. (3) It would have required a very powerful myth to have created a man like the Apostle Paul. In a sense was he not a miracle? A moral and spiritual wonder, at any rate? Could he have been the product of such a system of Christianity as Strauss proposes? When we consider his whole history we are bound to answer in the negative. (4) It must not be forgotten that Jesus Christ Himself was not a myth. There are some historical references concerning Him preserved in other writings, apart from the New Testament, and there is no inconsistency between anything that is there recorded and the portrait which is presented of Him in the Gospels. (5) If the narrative of the miracles was of mythical origin and growth, incongruities and objectionable features common to most allegorical and mythological tales, and which are even found in some of the apocryphal books of

the New Testament, would have presented themselves. But these are wanting in the story of Jesus, and the stamp of honesty and sincerity is impressed upon every page of the New Testament. (6) One thing more requires to be added: the Gospels do not really present Jesus as a great thaumaturgist. They distinctly show, as we have already discovered, that He did not desire to engage in this work to any considerable extent. The performance of such deeds was but accidental in His earthly ministry. They were valuable manifestations of His power certainly, but never did He regard them as the supreme purpose of His earthly life and mission.

We have left one miracle yet to be considered: properly it belongs to the next section of our subject, as it occurred very late in the public ministry of our Lord, but it will be convenient to take it up at this point, and with it complete what we have to say under this head. "The cursing of the fig-tree" (11[12ff.]) presents difficulties that are peculiar to itself, and we are not at all certain that it ought to be classed as a miracle. One of the headings given to St. Mark, chapter 11, in certain editions of the New Testament, is "Christ curseth a fruitless fig-tree." Now, on reading over the narrative, we find that Jesus said to the fig-tree, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter"; and it was the next day when passing it, and seeing it "dried up from the roots," that St. Peter said, "Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away." The question is, Did the words of Jesus involve such a curse that the tree immediately began to wither up? That is to say, could these words of our Lord be strictly interpreted as a curse,

or was this idea not attributable rather to Peter's recollection of what had happened the day before? Swete says: "Neither form (Matthew's nor Mark's) can properly be called a curse or imprecation. Contrast Gen. 3^{17}; Heb. $6^{7f.}$" It is generally admitted that there was something abnormal about this tree; it is believed, for example, that it should not have had leaves at this time. So far as the words of Jesus are concerned, it might have gone on bearing leaves; it never could bear fruit. Bengel's remark is perhaps apposite, "Quod Jesu Christo non servit, indignum est quod ulli mortalium serviat."

The main difficulty, however, is that it really shows our Lord in a rather unfavourable light, because it represents Him as doing an act that was quite contrary to His usual custom, and indeed unworthy of Him. The tree was an inanimate object, acted upon by forces and conditions outside itself, and it was actually dependent upon these for fruitfulness. Yet it is condemned here as if it were the most guilty and worthless transgressor. Then, is not our Lord shown somewhat in an unreasonable attitude on this occasion? He goes forward to this fig-tree, "if haply he might find any thing thereon," though "the time of figs was not yet." Well, it is asked, was He not expecting too much; and ought the tree to be blamed for not bearing fruit out of the proper season? Or is it that the knowledge and understanding of Jesus were now at fault? These are some of the difficult questions that are, as we have said, peculiar to this miracle. How shall we answer them? Various suggestions are offered by way of explanation, and Morrison in his *Commentary* enters very elaborately into a detailed

exposition of the passage, and criticism of those commentators who impugn its reasonableness and integrity. Most modern scholars regard the incident as a parable in action. The fig-tree, with its abundant leaves but no fruit (and it was not unreasonable to expect fruit), is the people of Israel. The sentence of perpetual fruitlessness uttered by Jesus was a sign to the disciples of the rejection of the Jews. Certainly this is attractive, and fits into the religious situation; it also relieves us of most of the difficulties hinted at already. But does it not create some of its own? If it be accepted, we are bound to ask why the Evangelist so alters his style in relating this particular story. Furthermore, we feel some explanation is necessary for supposing that Jesus thus combined a parable with a miracle and so produced confusion in the mind of the disciples, and we might even add of the Church, ever since. His parables were commonly so striking and illuminative, that they were exceedingly apt illustrations of some point which He wished to emphasise. But in this case, the parabolic interpretation sought to be put upon the passage is arbitrary, and bears no relation at all to the immediate context. One hazards the opinion that it never would have been offered if the difficulties of a more literal interpretation had been less formidable. Moreover, the reference next day to the withered fig-tree contains no hint of such an interpretation, but takes up a different idea entirely, viz. the power of faith in God.

If we are not to accept this explanation, how then shall we interpret this somewhat extraordinary incident? Well, may we not plead that it is

unreasonable to expect that every incident, occurrence, or statement in the Bible, or even in the New Testament alone, should be fully unfolded and explained in terms acceptable to the modern mind? Many of the details have been greatly compressed, or have been even omitted altogether. It is well known that the writers only allowed themselves a certain space for their composition, with the consequence that many particulars which might have helped to a reliable exegesis are not forthcoming. Then, sometimes, Christian scholars have felt themselves hampered by the feeling that they must always defend the Lord from any—even apparent—inharmonious word or action. That is a most laudable ambition; but is it necessary? Is His moral worth not sufficiently evident to enable us confidently to affirm that if He allowed the swine, *e.g.*, to be hurled to destruction by the dispossessed devils, He had good reason for doing so; or that if He condemned a fig-tree to fruitlessness, there was some justification for this act, although we may not be able to discover what that was?

Is it necessary to search into every minute detail of such an episode as that now before us? Is it of supreme importance to ascertain whether Jesus did, or did not, know if there was fruit on the tree? As the Evangelist tells the story, the impression is left that Jesus went to it because He was hungry, and He resolved to try if *haply* He might find something on it. He did not go forward with the certainty of finding fruit; quite evidently He knew it would be unusual for the tree to bear at that season; still, there was at least the chance. This is the force we take of ἀρα. Swete says: "The ἀρα

reviews the circumstances already recited and infers from them the chance of success." But obviously there is also present the apprehension of failure. Regarding it in this way, there is little question of disappointment or chagrin at not finding fruit, and there is no consequent cursing because it had not been discovered. We suggest that Jesus not having succeeded in finding fruit, determined to turn this incident to advantage in imparting a very important lesson to the disciples. He says to the tree, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter," undoubtedly suggesting to the minds of His followers condemnation of hypocrisy (for when there were leaves, we understand, there also should have been fruit). We might paraphrase His utterance in a sentence. "Do not deceive any other man hereafter, by a pretence and empty show which have no reality." Still, that is not the real lesson He intends the disciples to learn. It is only on the morrow that the incident itself bears fruit. Let us remember that the days are but few now in the earthly life of our Lord; yet still the faith of His followers has not attained to that fulness and fervency which He desired. Presently the greatest trial of that faith would take place, through His death and resurrection. He had given them already, in the two miracles associated with the Sea of Galilee, instructions well suited to their particular case, and which must have made a tremendous impression upon them. And now He wished, at last, in some manner to assure them of His absolute power over nature in another form, so that their faith might survive the shock of His death and prepare them in a measure for the still more wonderful, extraordinary, and

supernatural experience of His resurrection. Here was ample material ready to His hand for an illustration. The lesson was one of the last He was to teach to them—the power of faith even to work things that appeared impossible. It was such instruction as their peculiar circumstances required at this time. This explanation has the merit of keeping before us the purpose Jesus had in view, which was the increasing of the faith of the disciples. But if it is not acceptable, then we fear we are forced to admit the problem is insoluble so far as we are concerned, for it seems indisputable that the parabolic interpretation usually given is rather imported into the passage than deduced from it. The lesson of the incident, which harmonises with the context, unquestionably is the power of faith, and this is illustrated by the fig-tree losing its bloom so quickly, and fading away so soon, following upon the word of Jesus. Again He spoke with power.

We have only been able to make a rather limited survey of the miracles as they are recorded in St. Mark's Gospel, and to consider in greater detail a few that seemed more difficult to understand. Every one of these instances of the practice of miraculous power must have exercised a great influence upon the views entertained respecting their Master by the disciples and others who were brought into contact with Him in these acts : they would be a surprising, and at first very mysterious, revelation of His personality. There can be little doubt that as these works increased, the followers of Jesus must have found it difficult to settle in their minds whether He was the Christ or not.

It is instructive to observe that after the confession at Cæsarea Philippi, St. Mark records only three more miracles. These are: "The healing of the dumb spirit" ($9^{17ff.}$) when the disciples are helpless, "healing of blind Bartimæus" ($10^{46ff.}$), and "the barren fig-tree" ($11^{12ff.}$). When we remember the long list of miracles in this Gospel, we may well inquire if the Evangelist has not betrayed a purpose in recording practically the whole of them before Simon's confession. The inference is, that these extraordinary deeds had a particular object to accomplish, at least in the mind of the Evangelist, and when that was secured, further reference to them was no longer necessary; for we cannot suppose Jesus practically ceased to perform them after the incident at Cæsarea Philippi. The object seems to have been secured in the confession. All these works were part of the education and training of the disciples and others respecting the Man-Jesus of Nazareth. The seeds of future faith were being sown now through these events and experiences: sometimes it seemed a rather hopeless task; but the impression was being made—the atmosphere was being created. These wonderful acts must have gradually, and perhaps even somewhat slowly, lifted their thoughts from Jesus as an extraordinary man —as a superman—to something even still higher. So far as St. Mark's Gospel is concerned, it is describing the situation correctly enough to state that the distinctively miraculous work of Jesus effectively came to an end when Peter with the other disciples could say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MESSIANIC TITLES

In tracing the Christological development of St. Mark's Gospel, the very greatest weight must assuredly be given to the influence the miracles exercised in moulding the opinions that people were now forming concerning Jesus, and which prepared them, in some measure, for the very highest thoughts in relation to His person and power. There were, however, other forces and agents operating, which although less prominent, still produced a very considerable effect in creating and perfecting the Christological ideas entertained by His followers regarding Him, from the beginning of His ministry and for some time thereafter—indeed, until these conceptions had reached their full maturity. These are all brought out in the Gospel in a very simple and natural way as the Evangelist tells his story, and we must now consider some of them briefly.

It is, of course, very questionable if the disciples who were first called had any clear ideas concerning the Master whom they were requested to follow. Still, if we are correct in supposing that some of these disciples had been followers of John the Baptist, and that Jesus Himself may have for a time

attended upon John's ministry, then these, at least, would really enter upon their discipleship with what we may consider a different view of Jesus from that entertained by others. It is to be presumed that they would have heard the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus (John $1^{29ff.}$). The strange statement, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1^{29}), would not be easily forgotten. It is extremely probable that it was when John had been removed from the active work of bearing testimony to Jesus, that these disciples of his accepted the invitation of the new Rabbi, and began to follow Jesus. Certainly they had not, at this time, a clear apprehension of all that was involved in John's statement; but we are safe in believing that they, at any rate, began with the idea that their Master was more than an ordinary rabbi. That remark, however, will not apply to those other disciples who had not come under the Baptist's influence, nor heard his statements respecting Jesus; they would probably be attracted to the latter just because He claimed to be a rabbi; or perhaps they may have had personal relationship with the earlier disciples just now referred to. Yet this claim itself was surely unique at the time, and in the conditions in which it was made. He had not been trained as others who were designed for this office. He was not a man of letters; He had not the superior education which the times provided. Instead of that, He had spent His youth and early manhood at the carpenter's bench in the obscure town of Nazareth. This was, as we know, one of the reasons why the Jews could not satisfactorily account for Jesus. "How knoweth this man letters,

having never learned ? " (John 7^{15}). Now, all the disciples must soon have come to know that He had not been educated in any rabbinical school, and they must therefore have recognised some other authority and claim upon their service. No doubt, too, the first group of disciples would soon inform the later members of what had been said by John, and thus have early awakened their interest and curiosity. We are not satisfied that the relationship which existed between Jesus and His disciples was that of an ordinary rabbi and his pupils. In the case of some of them—Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee—there was more in it from the very first ; and the others soon came, we think, to view Jesus in the same way, to entertain the same thoughts concerning Him as those just named. There was, as we are often told in St. Mark's Gospel, the authoritative note in the teaching and preaching of Jesus which differentiated Him from the ordinary rabbi, and which must have affected greatly the minds of His followers.

Presently, when they had made some progress in understanding the nature of His work and methods, He imparted to them a share of His own power and authority (Mark 3^{14-15}). They were ordained to take upon themselves a portion of His labours—to preach, to heal, and to exorcise. This right to delegate His power and office to them, even in a measure, must have been a most important experience in their discipleship. They had not been for very long His pupils ; neither had they had a prolonged acquaintance with His methods. Like others, they had been impressed by His power, and lo ! now He had given a share of it to them, and

some of the things, at any rate, that He had been so successful in performing, were now within the scope of their abilities to accomplish. They might well be astonished at this strange Master, who could not only do works which no other man did, but could give them power to perform such works also. Obviously this must have been a most important period in the mental awakening and in the educational development of the disciples, and must likewise have caused them often to discuss their Teacher among themselves. Then in $6^{7ff.}$ we find them being sent out freshly endowed with power, and commissioned to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. They were to go forth practically unprepared, as He had gone unprepared—so far as material things were concerned—and to follow in strict detail His own example, as when He had entered upon His public labours. The great success of their evangelistic efforts must have had a wonderful effect upon themselves—their work was done in His name. Often, therefore, they must have thought about Him; frequently, as they healed, or exorcised, they would question in their own souls whence He had such power; and if they were men of sound judgment, and we may believe they were, they must have found themselves compelled not seldom to admit Jesus was no ordinary rabbi. Even Nicodemus, from observation at a distance, is found to conclude that He was a "teacher come from God," and affirms as proof of that, that no man could do the miracles Jesus had done "except God be with him" (John 3^{2}). How much greater, then, must have been the effect produced upon the disciples as they came daily into contact with Him,

and entered actually into the various experiences which testified infallibly to the extraordinary power He possessed! These experiences, as we can easily see, were further contributing to the preparation of their minds for the greater revelation that was yet to come. The confession of Simon at Cæsarea was not by any means "a bolt from the blue."

We find Jesus claimed to forgive sins very early in His public ministry. It is, indeed, first met with in St. Mark's Gospel in the second chapter, in connection with the healing of the palsied man borne of four, after our Lord had returned the second time to Capernaum. This incident was a rather striking instance of the triumph of faith, whether on the part of the man himself or of his friends. The words of Jesus spoken to the sick man most certainly aroused attention: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" ("Child, thy sins are receiving forgiveness," Swete), 2^5. We do not need to enter into any discussion as to whether this man's disease was the consequence of sin, or whether Jesus was only accepting the Jewish position common at the time, viz. that all disease was the result of sin. The point before us is, that Jesus here explicitly claims the power, the right, to forgive sins. The scribes who happened to be present saw in this claim an infringement of the Divine prerogative; and although they did not speak openly, they muttered among themselves, saying, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Jesus is represented as perceiving within Himself that these thoughts are passing through their minds, and challenges them openly. Deliberately now, and publicly, He claims that He has

spoken these words with full intent, and follows on to say, "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (I will now prove it by healing this man of his palsy)." We pass over the evident intention of the Evangelist here to show that Jesus had power to interpret the thoughts passing through the minds of the scribes. The point need not, indeed, be pressed, for it does not follow there was anything supernatural in it. An acute observer can often see when there is mental opposition to the argument he is endeavouring to establish. But there is no doubt His claim to authority to forgive sins was most startling. That was regarded, and we may say rightly regarded, as exclusively and peculiarly a Divine privilege. Even yet we will probably agree that "none can forgive sins but God only." The very definition of sin, that it is "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God" (Shorter Catechism, 14), shows this to be the case, for if sin be a transgression of God's law, only God can forgive it. This claim of Jesus was certainly a thunderclap in the theological heavens, both of the disciples and of the fanatically orthodox scribes. The full force of the situation will perhaps best be understood if we remember the method of forgiveness familiar to the Jews.

(1) Forgiveness itself had been a recognised thing among them from the very earliest times. It was the one thought which was especially prominent in the observances of the Day of Atonement. The priests were habitually engaged in pronouncing absolution.

(2) A prerequisite to forgiveness was atonement

through a sin-offering. The victims' life had to be taken and their blood sprinkled upon the altar.

(3) The distinction between "bloody" and "bloodless" offerings must be remembered, and that no sin-offering was bloodless, except in the case of extreme poverty, when an offering consisting of a "tenth of an ephah of fine flour" was allowed (Lev. $5^{11f.}$).

(4) There were cases, perhaps, in which it was understood sin was forgiven without requiring a particular sacrifice.

"Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—Ps. $51^{16ff.}$

Also Ps. 32^{5}; Isa. 43^{25}, 55^{7}, 1^{18}, etc.

It is extremely probable that in all these particular references a sincere sacrificial system is presumed to be in operation. But we cannot enter into that. There is no doubt, notwithstanding these particular instances, the usual practice was to look for absolution through sacrifice. No itinerating rabbi would have been likely to take upon himself the power to forgive sins, even in the days of Jesus; and in any event, these scribes would not have recognised our Lord to be a proper rabbi.

(5) Is it to be understood Jesus was claiming priestly functions at this time, although He had no right to these, not being of the tribe of Levi, nor connected with the priesthood in any way? Such a claim would have been sternly resisted by the priestly party.

Now, as the disciples, as well as the rabbis, believed that only God could forgive sin, the moment would be an exceedingly trying one for them, yet as soon as Jesus declared that He would attest His claim to such authority by the exercise of His power to heal, they must have felt on safe ground again. They had already witnessed marvellous things done by Him, and possibly now had little fear of failure.

We can hardly exaggerate the importance of this incident, and the effect it must have produced not only upon the disciples, but upon all who were present. Capernaum had already had experience of the healing power of Jesus, but there were features in this case that made it different from all previous instances. The idea of forgiving sin in this way was entirely new to the people, was a fresh claim put forward by Jesus, and consequently led their minds into quite a new channel. When thinking of the occurrence afterwards, the more thoughtful must have asked themselves whether their Master really insisted upon Divine equality at this time. If He had said, " Child, in the name and by the authority of God, I say thy sins are forgiven thee," there would possibly have been no objection raised ; He would have been insisting then that He was no more than a delegate from God, with authority. But He speaks in His own name, and His word is again with power. The right to heal those who are morally sick is just as much His as the right to heal those that are physically ill. Possibly the disciples would be much exercised in their minds as to whether they were prepared to acknowledge this claim of Jesus to the full ; but the miracles they had seen Him perform already, and this one in particular

of healing the paralytic man, would prepare them still further to expect even greater and more wonderful things from Him in the future. It is more likely, however, in the excitement of all that was happening around them, they did not yet see the full significance of this incident, nor the position taken up by Jesus in regard to it. All these things were leading them on stage by stage, step by step, to that time when they should be able to know assuredly that He was the Christ of God.

In asserting His claim to forgive sins, Jesus employs a phrase concerning Himself, for the first time, which is noteworthy and has received a great deal of attention: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth," etc. It is rather extraordinary that He should use this title in reference to Himself on this occasion, without a word of preparation, and indeed in answer to the manifestly hostile challenge of the scribes who were present. It would seem to have been a term well known to them, otherwise He would not have adopted it in the circumstances. The question, then, arises whether there is involved in His remark quoted above anything more than a claim to forgive sins. A great deal of interest has been awakened in the title, "the Son of Man," because it is only used by our Lord Himself with reference to Himself, and because it is believed to have been an accepted Messianic title common among the Jews about the beginning of our Christian era. What is its significance? The answer to that question involves much thought and research. There are differences of opinion which may be difficult to reconcile. As a preliminary, however, we would

perhaps do well to keep the following words of Dr. James Moffatt in mind: "It (the Son of Man) is not a title to be isolated. The 'Father in Heaven,' the 'Kingdom of God,' and the 'Son of Man,' form a trinity of ideas which have developed organically to the religious consciousness of Jesus, and which are reciprocally to be defined and understood; in them His preaching has reached its climax." (This is a quotation from Holtzman's *Das messianische Bewusstsein Jesu*," p. 54.) Dr. Moffatt adds: "What the *Son of Man* specially emphasises is the Divine mission of Jesus in connection with the Messianic Kingdom" (*The Theology of the Gospels*, p. 150). Probably most of us will be agreed as to the "Divine mission of Jesus." Possibly what we want to know is whether the words the *Son of Man* admit of us saying Jesus was Himself Divine; or more exactly, was this, as He now used it, a Messianic title, and was it so understood by all those concerned?

Perhaps it would be as well, first of all, to endeavour to ascertain what its significance was for the scribes, because it is manifest that is the key to the use of it by Jesus on this first occasion. Who was the "Son of Man" in Jewish teaching? Edersheim, we regret to say, is not so helpful here as we would expect. Practically all that he gives may be compressed into two sentences: "But was He a mere man, like even the most honoured of God's servants? Man, indeed; but the 'Son of Man' in the emphatic and well understood sense of being the Representative Man," etc. (p. 505, vol. i.). In a note he adds: "That the expression 'Son of Man' (בן אדם) was well understood as referring to the

Messiah, appears from the following anti-Christian passage (*Jes Taan*, 65*b* at bottom): 'If a man shall say to thee I am God, he lies; if he says I am the Son of Man, his end will be to repent it,'" etc. Is the situation so clear and definite as Edersheim seems to think? In other words, is it quite certain that the term 'Son of Man' was generally understood as having a Messianic reference? If it were so, then we are simply amazed that the scribes did not object to its application on this very first occasion of its employment. We certainly know they did not admit that Jesus was the Messiah. Further, if it was the purpose of our Lord thus early to reveal Himself as the Messiah by applying to Himself a well-known Messianic appellation, was there any need of asking the questions that He propounded at Cæsarea Philippi? And still more urgently must we ask, Why did He speak to Peter there as He did, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16^{17}), or why did He command them to keep this knowledge strictly to themselves (Mark 8^{30})?

No explanation of the use of the phrase "Son of Man" can be acceptable which does not take the confession at Cæsarea Philippi fully into account. It is quite likely some of the scribes who were present at Capernaum on this occasion had come from Jerusalem and would be acquainted with the title "Son of Man," the origin of which many find in Dan. 7^{13}. They were certain, however, to be acquainted with its use in Ezekiel, where it is found much more frequently, and appears to be a designation for man in a general sense, or as we often use

the word "humanity." In Daniel 7 the term has a peculiar import given to it, for the Son of Man "came with the clouds of heaven," and there was given to him "a dominion and glory, and a Kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Now this apocalypse gives its own explanation in verses 18 and 27 of the same chapter: "But the saints of the most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. . . . And the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Possibly it is true that the things predicated of this Kingdom are the same as those predicated elsewhere of the Messiah's Kingdom, *e.g.* Ps. 72 and various passages in Isaiah. Kirkpatrick says of the former, "It is a Messianic psalm." So also is Ps. 45. This author gives a very interesting note on verse 17 of the psalm first mentioned which is worth transcribing: "According to the Talmud and Midrash, 'Yinnon,' יִנּוֹן (the qeri reading for יִנֳּנ of the text), the word in verse 17 which is rendered 'shall be continued' or 'shall have issue,' is one of the eight names of the Messiah. 'His name,' so the rabbis mystically interpreted the passage, 'is Yinnon.' Why is He called Yinnon? Because He will make those who sleep in the dust to flourish, *i.e.* He will raise the dead." In view, therefore, of the passages in the Psalms and Isaiah, we might say the reference in

Daniel is Messianic; but it is not very distinctly so. The language there does not point with certainty to any particular person, but seems decidedly to refer to the "Saints of God," and these may be possibly the people of Israel. The LXX translates "the Son of Man" of Daniel 7 υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, without the article, properly taking the original as indefinite. Dr. Whitehouse, in an article in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, says: "The similitudes of the Book of Enoch (about 100 B.C.) give a yet more definite and distinguished rôle to 'the Son of Man.' Here He assumes a distinct personality and is evidently more than mere man: 'He sits on God's throne which is His own throne,' has an everlasting Kingdom and is supreme judge. In many of the points referred to we see correspondence with the declarations of Isaiah and the Psalmists regarding the Messiah." The book appears to have exercised a considerable influence in fixing a definite connotation to the title "Son of Man," as it came afterwards to be used. There is considerable doubt as to the date of the "Similitudes." Whitehouse's exact words are "written probably after 100 B.C." That might of course mean 4 B.C., but he evidently seems to regard it much earlier than that. Prof. Gould, in an article also on the "Son of Man" in the same *Dictionary*, appears to prefer a late date. He says: "In order to discover how Jewish readers of the Book of Daniel in the time shortly preceding and shortly following our Lord's ministry interpreted the figure, . . . we turn to the evidence of the 'Similitudes.' . . . The date of the 'Similitudes'—a later portion of the Book of Enoch—is more open to doubt.

R. H. Charles (*Book of Enoch*, p. 29) holds them to have been written between 94–79 or 70–64 B.C. Schürer (*H.J.P.*, II. iii. 68) places them somewhat later: 'at the very soonest, in the time of Herod,' *i.e.* between 37–4 B.C." It would be of some help in our present investigations if we could be sure of a date, but probably some time during the reign of Herod the Great is as near as we can come to the period when this book would be effecting much influence. Assuming that to be so, we must then ask whether there was time for it to have exercised such a power in the intellectual and religious world as to give fixed connotation to the words, and that this import would be generally known and accepted. Whether that was possible will depend upon the view we take of the conditions of the period, and even although the rabbis may have been familiar with the "Similitudes," it is doubtful if the common people would have been generally acquainted with them. We think there is positive evidence that the meaning was not quite so commonly understood as is often supposed. Take the passage in John 12^{34}: "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" Let us note the situation carefully as it appears here. Jesus has spoken of the "Son of Man" being glorified (ver. 23): then in verse 32 He declares plainly, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Out of this arises the question of verse 34. The remark of the people that according to the law Messiah was to abide for ever, possibly leaves it open, quite

legitimately, to infer that they understood the Son of Man as a title for the Messiah, for the latter word had not been used by Jesus. He had spoken of the "Son of Man" in the one verse and of Himself personally in the other. But does it not also suggest some confusion as to the identity of the individual designated the "Son of Man"? Alford in his commentary on John 12^{34} says: "They thought some other Son of Man, not the Messiah, was meant; because this lifting up (which they saw implied taking away) was inapplicable to their idea of the Messiah, usually known as the Son of Man." Yet writing on the "Son of Man" (Matt. 8^{20}) he says: "It appears from John 12^{34} that the Jews understood it to mean the Messiah." But do not these statements seem to contradict each other? Be that as it may, we are justified in believing from John 12^{34} that there was some confusion at that time as to the use of the title "Son of Man," and it is, consequently, possible it was not during the earlier part of the ministry of Jesus employed so generally and exclusively as a Messianic designation as many suppose. When, then, Jesus speaks to the Jews in Mark 2^{10}, using this phrase, it is apparently with the same class of people He is arguing as in John 12^{34}, so that it is within the bounds of probability these persons did not understand its Messianic import. If they had, as we have hinted before, they would have challenged His adoption of it to Himself. It is more than possible that the disciples did not realise its Messianic meaning, if it had such at this time. They were brought up, evidently, in a somewhat circumscribed sphere of life, and the principal means of education and

instruction available for them was the synagogue; so that it is not unlikely that the Book of Enoch, although it may have been known to scholars in Jerusalem, was quite unknown to fishermen in Galilee; while, on the other hand, the phrase "Son of Man," equal to "mortal," used so frequently by Ezekiel, would be very familiar to their ears; and it is very probable this would be the meaning they would take from Jesus' use of the term. Moreover, it corresponds in every detail with the situation revealed at Capernaum.

But we have not exhausted all the possibilities in this case. Leaving the followers of Jesus out of account, we must recognise that there is nothing improbable in suggesting that the scribes and even Jesus were familiar with the teaching of the "Similitudes," and that He was using the phrase "Son of Man" deliberately and intentionally that the disciples might not understand. This seems to be the position taken up by Dr. D. W. Forrest in his book *The Christ of History and Experience*. In a note on p. 64 he says concerning the words "Son of Man": "Though on His lips it was a designation of the Messiah, it was a veiled designation; and purposely so, as enabling Him on account of its diverse meanings or allusions to introduce gradually into the minds of His disciples the new and deeper conception of Messiahship which alone He had come to realise." It must be admitted that there is no inherent impossibility in Jesus being acquainted with the Book of Enoch. The incident which happened in Jerusalem when he was twelve years of age (Luke $2^{41ff.}$) shows that He was of an inquiring, thoughtful disposition. He probably would seek to

know all that had been spoken of the Messiah, and this more especially, as soon as the idea that He was Himself the "anointed of God" began to suggest itself to His mind. Let us accept, then, that it was possible Jesus understood a Messianic significance in the words "Son of Man" when He here spoke them. We may similarly admit that the scribes were familiar with this import, and understood it distinctly. The only persons to be kept in the dark evidently were the disciples—His friends; while His enemies, who had probably come to investigate the position of affairs in Capernaum, and who were clearly hostile, are to understand that He claims to be Messiah. Was this likely? Is it in harmony with the whole atmosphere of the Gospel story? Jesus was never swift to throw the challenge in the teeth of His enemies in this way, and if He had, they would most certainly have taken it up. If they had understood Him as claiming to be Messiah, we need have no hesitation in thinking they would have directed their attention to that, and not to His claim to forgive sins. We hardly imagine they would have had any reluctance in believing that Messiah could thus forgive. The whole atmosphere of the situation shows that what they objected to was that a *man* should make such a claim. What was the idea in Jesus charging His disciples to secrecy after Cæsarea Philippi, if He had Himself in this public fashion proclaimed Himself to the scribes? But what purpose was to be secured by this veiled designation? If the disciples did not know that by it Jesus was claiming to be Messiah, we cannot see how it could help forward even "gradually the new and deeper conception of Messiahship." There

were times when, no doubt, He used veiled terms to convey instruction to His friends, which might or might not be understood by others. Here, according to Dr. Forrest's view, the position is exactly reversed, and we cannot see how that can be maintained.

There is another possible suggestion, but its mere statement practically involves its refutation. It might be urged that Jesus, the disciples, and the scribes all understood the Messianic import of the words the "Son of Man," but as the conception that had generally been entertained regarding Messiah was so exalted, and the predictions concerning His Kingdom represented it as so entirely magnificent, nobody present ever thought that Jesus, in saying "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," really meant to refer to Himself, because He was so decidedly at variance with all their ideas and thoughts respecting the Promised of God. The words of Jesus just quoted would in this case be utterly without point—He had undoubtedly an individual before His mind when He spoke them; and we wish to know whether any of those present believed that that individual was Messiah. We do not think so.

We feel it necessary, then, to abandon all these explanations and come back to the passage exactly as it stands, rendering it as indefinite: "But that ye may know a son of man—that a man in the fullest and best sense, if you will—has power on earth to forgive sins." At the moment of first utterance we do not believe there was any Messianicsuggestion in the term. It is an Old Testament phrase which Jesus may have adopted from Ezekiel rather than from Daniel, although it is not improbable

that He took it from the Psalms — "Son of Man" (indefinite) is found in Ps. 8^4, 80^{17}, 144^3. Neither the disciples nor the scribes were astonished, therefore, at the appropriation of the name by our Lord. Their minds were occupied with different things altogether. The essence of the situation is found in the insistence of Jesus that He had the right to forgive sins. And not only so, but, according to the term He used (Son of Man), He was claiming this for humanity. This was a blow at the very foundation of their present ecclesiastical system; it was a complete abrogation of the law of Moses, a disannulling of sacrifice, and an abandonment of the temple and its priesthood. And, of course, it could not be tolerated, but must be resisted by all means. The shadow of the cross has fallen upon Jesus at Capernaum; perhaps the opposition now awakened was only satisfied when His opponents saw Him ignominiously put to death at Calvary.

The name "Jesus" was one of the very commonest among the Jewish people. It possessed a certain significance originally, as we know from the Hebrew word from which it is derived. Probably that meaning was almost lost in the passing of the centuries, or through the very familiarity which resulted from the use of the name. Its purport was again asserted, and its full significance emphasised when the child born at Bethlehem was called "Jesus," "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1^{21}). Is there a possible parallel, or even a resemblance, in the use of the words "Son of Man"? These may certainly have been a common enough designation at first, and in general use among Jews were, possibly, equivalent to our word "mankind."

This was, we think, the meaning that Jesus intended when He spoke of a "Son of Man" in Mark 2^{10} and perhaps in 2^{28}, although here all the Synoptics make the reference definite: "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

When, however, we come to 8^{31}, "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders," etc., a different significance in the use of the phrase is discovered. If we now ask, Who is the Son of Man? there can be no doubt about the answer. Jesus must clearly be referring to Himself. But who was He? The reply is in the words of Peter, "Thou art the Christ." The scene at Cæsarea Philippi has now taken place and Jesus has revealed Himself. He is the Messiah—He is also the "Son of Man." It is quite evident that the import of the phrase in 8^{31} is essentially different from its use in 2^{10}. Apart from the history of the words, there can be little doubt now of their meaning, and one can no longer resist the inference that the "Messiah" and the "Son of Man" refer to the same Person. Perhaps there had been a Messianic content in the latter title, as it was regarded by some of the Jews already, but the appropriation of such names eventually by Jesus Himself filled them with greater fulness. To the Jews there would be some obscurity in His adoption of this title, because He was interpreting the prophecies and psalms spiritually, and they were understanding them literally. But there can be no doubt now that He claimed to be the Messiah and that He called Himself the Son of Man. Is there in the designating of Himself by this title a deliberate claim, then, to be Messiah? That is doubtful at the

first, but we think it was finally involved in His continued use of it after Peter's confession. The name "Jesus" was not perhaps very significant at the beginning of our Lord's career, but after the crucifixion was fully apprehended, its meaning was more highly appreciated. We make no reference here to the argument offered by some scholars that as Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and as there is no definite article in that language, He must always have used the expression indefinitely, even in Mark 8^{31}. It is doubtful if it has been fully established that Jesus only spoke Aramaic (*Expositor*, vi. p. 81). But we think it is straining the situation to suggest that the words spoken in $8^{31ff.}$ did not refer to a particular individual and that individual Himself. There was some point when the title received a clear Messianic import, and that was, we believe, in the conversation after the great confession.

We find, often, from the Old Testament that names meant a great deal to the Jews and were frequently given for a particular reason. This practice continued down to New Testament times (Matt. 1^{21}, 16^{18}). Was there a similar idea underlying the names given to our Lord, *e.g.* He sometimes called Himself the "Son of Man," but nobody else ever did? He was spoken of by others as the "Son of God," but He never applied that name to Himself. Perhaps this means that He was a real, true son of the race even though men should regard Him as so superior that He was worthy to be called the Son of God. Right at the opening of his Gospel St. Mark uses this title, and we have briefly noticed it there. We must now dwell for a few sentences more particularly upon these words than we did

then, being prepared, however, to expect a more advanced position in the title of the Gospel than may possibly be discovered in the body of it, for reasons already explained in connection with verse 1. We must be careful, as Prof. Stalker points out,[1] not to import into this "name" more than it was intended to contain. In our loose way of thinking we sometimes appear to accept it as absolutely certain that the phrase is an infallible proof of the Divinity of Jesus; but are we quite justified in doing so? Let us briefly trace the evolution of this title so far as we can do so. (1) We begin with Gen. $6^{2, 4}$, where we meet the expression in the plural בני האלהים. Three times in Job it is similarly found—1^{6}, 2^{1}, and 38^{7}. Now, it is difficult to say whether these references apply to angels, as some think, or merely to men—being "sons of God," of course, because they were brought into existence by Him. The last passage from Job seems to apply to angels, while it is more probable the others refer to men, for apparent reasons. "When the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy" is surely a creation ode. (2) There are then quite a number of passages in which it is Israel or Ephraim that is called the "Son"—"first-born," the word now being in the singular (Ex. 4^{22}; Jer. $31^{9, 20}$; Hos. 11^{1}). (3) There are two psalms in which the words used evidently are personal, and designate an individual who is clearly Messiah: "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. 2^{7}); "I will appoint him as firstborn, most high above the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89^{27}). This psalm is probably exilic; the titles "son" and

[1] Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.*

"firstborn" are transferred to the King, who is Israel's representative. It is very likely it had some influence in giving Messianic significance not only to the title "Son of God," but also to another one which we shall presently notice—"Son of David."

If we are to discover the meaning intended by St. Mark of the words we are now considering as applied to Jesus, it will probably be helpful to take up each passage where they are used, separately; there are not many of them. "Thou art my beloved son," uttered at the baptism and transfiguration, have already been before us, and as we shall need to refer to them again when we come to the consideration of the transfiguration, we therefore defer any further discussion of them at this point, but proceed with the other passages. The title "Son of God" is in the Earliest Gospel addressed to Jesus (apart from the baptism instance) first by demoniacs in 3^{11} —"And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." Again, the demoniac at Gadara as he is approaching, "Cried with a loud voice, saying, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God?" (5^{7}). To these two passages may be added 1^{24} as cognate with them on this point: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Swete says: "The earliest confession of sonship seems to have come from evil spirits, who knew Jesus better than He was known by His own disciples" (p. 57). Now here is a problem that is very difficult to solve. How was it these mentally deranged people thus early recognised

Jesus; indeed, even before He had made His claims definitely known, and one of them so very early as the time of His entrance upon His public work? Probably a satisfactory answer cannot be given. It is an interesting point, however, to note the fact that in the present day, persons who are mentally afflicted are frequently very susceptible to the influences of religion; and a mild form of punishment occasionally adopted in some of the asylums is to refuse permission to attend public worship. The psychological effect of such religious worship and exercises upon people so diseased would possibly provide a fruitful field for investigation for those qualified to enter upon it. It would be quite wrong to suppose certainly, that because of the peculiar form of the malady, such persons are incapable of being favourably influenced by religion. The varieties of mental disease leave many of them quite sane in regard to such matters, and wonderfully acute in forming judgments. Many a story could be related in illustration, but we refrain. Influenced by a consideration of modern cases, however, we are bound to say it would be very gratuitous to assume that all these persons who testified to Jesus did not understand what they were saying, or that their testimony was utterly valueless. Why, then, did not Jesus accept it? Well, probably the best answer is that it was given too early, before sufficient preparations had been made on the public mind to receive it. Even the intellects and hearts of the disciples, notwithstanding their close intimacy with their Master, required a very considerable time for preparation. Jesus also, no doubt, refused the testimony of the unclean spirits, because it could

have been so easily discredited as coming from such people; quite obviously it would not have strengthened His position. It would have been regarded as tainted evidence at that time, and with all our advancement in the understanding of mental diseases, we are not certain it would not be so regarded still. The opposing Jews would not have hesitated to take advantage of such a circumstance, for, as we know, they attempted to explain His miraculous powers in this respect by a reference to evil agency. But although we may not be able to account for this early recognition of Jesus by these people, one striking thing that we ought to remember is, that what they said of Jesus, He afterwards claimed as a fact for Himself. Also we must not forget that they were free from all bias and preconception—their infirmity aiding them in these directions. Their mental condition was phenomenal, and they were, therefore, less suspicious of anything that was abnormal. They were for some reason more susceptible to the influences of the truth. Even the disciples were filled with prepossessions these demoniacs never experienced; they had, in a sense, the eyes of a child, and the convicting force of the power and goodness of Jesus encountered no opposition in their minds, and thus early they realised who He was. Their words are, perhaps, a witness to the effect of the life of Christ where it had no deliberate, active or latent, opposition to encounter. Jesus refused to allow them to testify to Him, but He never said their statements were untrue, He never contradicted one of them. Afterwards, He made the same claims precisely for Himself. Still, it is most impressive to find that they

alone thus early recognised Him. There are, perhaps, more things in the world of spirits than we wot of; notwithstanding the increasing interest taken in the occult and spiritual in these times, it is doubtful if any solid progress has been made. It is deeply interesting to reflect that astronomy, for example, is a much more advanced science than psychology.

Only two other passages require to be examined, viz. 14^{61} and 15^{39}. The former verse is as follows: "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" This is, of course, a different form of the same expression—possibly the High Priest was too scrupulous to use any definite Divine name on this occasion. Besides, "the Son of the Blessed" just meant "the Son of God"; the pre-eminently *blessed* could only be God. The answer of Jesus is rather impressive: "And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." We have said that Jesus did not use this title Son of God Himself; neither does He appear willing sometimes to accept it even from others. He acknowledges in answer to the High Priest that He is "the Son of the Blessed"; but His use of the phrase "Son of Man" in His reply shows that for some reason He prefers it. In 13^{32} it may be concluded that He refers to Himself as "the Son," but does not use the exact words the "Son of God." "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." In the parable of the wicked husbandmen ($12^{1ff.}$) the reference is clearly in the same direction.

The last time the words "Son of God" are applied in this Gospel to Jesus is in 15^{39}, in which the centurion is made to say, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Literally we should read with Menzies as in R.V. margin, "A Son of God." This author commenting on the verse now before us says: "Instead of utter languor and prostration, Jesus exhibits at the close of life a triumphant vigour, which makes the centurion think him not an ordinary man but a hero or a demigod surpassing the measure of human strength." Probably this is correct; we do not know enough of the religious and spiritual condition of the centurion to dogmatise. Swete says: "*υἱος Θεου* is certainly more than *δίκαιος*, but the centurion, who borrowed the words from the Jewish priests (Matt. $27^{41ff.}$) could scarcely have understood them even in the Messianic sense." We wonder whether it was impossible for the centurion to have been a proselyte, or even a Jew? In either of these cases it would make a considerable difference, perhaps, in our interpretation of his words. Nothing, however, can possibly be gained by dwelling on that point further.

In all these references, then, we find that the title "Son of God" was used by those who were outside the circle of Jesus, and never by Himself in the exact phrase, although the thought itself—the idea—was perhaps acceptable to Him. It is not easy in these circumstances to estimate the Christological value of this title. Probably as it was at first used by maniacs, or, to adopt the more Scriptural phrase, by people having unclean spirits, very little weight would be ascribed to it either by the disciples or by others; and this more especially so, seeing

that Jesus on all such occasions commanded those who spoke of Him as the Son of God to keep silence. This would no doubt induce those who heard Him thus speak to conclude that He was not making any such claim, and so we are probably justified in believing that the employment of this title by those already mentioned did not contribute much to the advancement of the Christological development in the Gospel. We face quite a different position when we come to the use of the words by the High Priest: every one now present is cognisant of all that is involved in this claim by Jesus, and as we have seen, it is put to Him in the most solemn and direct form, and His answer is equally solemn and emphatic, "I am." But we know that some time before this stage has been reached, the disciples and other followers of Jesus have already arrived at the highest possible Christological height. The explicit declaration of the Sonship of Jesus must, we believe, be found rather at the baptism and transfiguration than in the use of the words "Son of God" by those who were possessed by unclean spirits. Nevertheless, we cannot say that even this had not some contribution to give to the intellectual development of the disciples respecting the person of Jesus. When they took these words along with the experiences through which they were passing, the title and what was involved in it would at least give point and direction to the speculations concerning Him which must have now been occupying their minds.

The references to the Son of David in our Gospel really belong to the next section, but perhaps we may anticipate and discuss them here, and

so complete the study of the names that were applied to, or adopted by, Jesus.

In a Gospel which was probably compiled chiefly for the use of Romans we need not expect to find Him often spoken of as the "Son of David." As a matter of fact, there are only two occasions when this title seems to have been used, and the employment of it was neither by Jesus nor His disciples. Blind Bartimæus appealed to Him at Jericho in the words, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark $10^{47f.}$). This is generally accepted as a Messianic designation, and coming so late in the ministry of Jesus there is really nothing against that view. Menzies points out that it is the "first public and unrebuked recognition of Jesus in the character of Messiah." As such, it is certainly interesting, indeed we may say even important. It is, therefore, very strange that it should come from a blind beggar, although he was probably a Jew. It decidedly appears somewhat noteworthy that the first public recognition of Jesus as "Son of God" should come from those who had unclean spirits, and that the first unchecked public declaration of His royal lineage—that He was the "Son of David," the long-looked-for Messiah—should be distinctly traceable to the utterance of a common beggar.

It would appear as if the poor and outcast were given powers of understanding and appreciation that were denied to others, reminding us of the words of Jesus, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy

sight" (Matt. $11^{25f.}$). But although the name is thus publicly given by a wayside mendicant, it is not forgotten. The enthusiasm and excitement started outside Jericho are, in a measure, maintained until Jerusalem is reached. And this name once given, is found so appropriate by the crowd of admirers who now follow Jesus, that they can find no better when they give Him a welcoming ovation as He enters into Jerusalem publicly recognised as Messiah for the first time. Mark, in his account, does not give the precise word on this occasion, but he preserves the idea: "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest" ($11^{9f.}$). Luke, in his parallel passage, is very general, but has a recollection of his own account of the nativity: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19^{38}). Matthew, writing for Jews, as we would expect, is most specific, and furnishes some fuller details of the scene: "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21^{9}). Substantially the accounts agree in recognising Jesus as the Son of David, *i.e.* as the Messiah. Probably the warmth of the enthusiasm of His followers now reaches its highest point. Their doubts, their hesitations, their waiting have all come to an end; the King has at last come to His city to claim His own. The royal house of David had for long been but a bare tree deprived of all its verdure and beauty; yea, but a

barren stump in an inhospitable soil; yet now the words of the great prophet Isaiah were to be fulfilled: "And there goes forth a sprout out of the stump of Jesse, and a shoot out of its roots brings forth fruit" (Isa. 11^1, Delitzsch). This must surely be the day of which he spoke, declaring that the sprout from the root of Jesse shall be "a banner"——a rallying-point for the peoples, which even the nations shall seek, and "its resting-place is glorious." As this notion took hold of the fancy of many in the crowded city, they may have taken up the shout, "Hosanna to the son of David," without much thought or conviction in their minds—a crowd is wont to do that. Yet there were some present who were now thoroughly convinced, and perhaps even satisfied. These were, of course, the disciples and others who had been close attendants upon the ministry of Jesus—those waiting for the "consolation of Israel"—and yet probably, even now, they could not explain how that which they hoped for and expected could be realised. There were certainly many reasons which urged them on to the full assurance that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Most High; nevertheless, things were about to happen that would shake that faith to its very foundation. Our Lord in thus riding into Jerusalem in literal fulfilment of the words of Zech. 9^9 must have appealed strongly to the imagination of His countrymen. He possibly adopted this method deliberately with that purpose in view. His action made it quite clear to all who saw Him that He most certainly regarded Himself as the Messiah. And so, for an hour, the city echoed and re-echoed its welcome as He passed through its streets. Happy

hearts were in that crowd, and therefore they could sing and shout—some, perhaps, were ready even to draw swords in Messiah's cause. It was but the glory of a December sun, passing away so swiftly, to be succeeded by the keen and biting frost. The Messianic conception of the multitude and that of Jesus were so fundamentally different that soon the shouts died away, and the vision of glory passed into a halo of suffering.

There is a further passage—Mark $12^{35ff.}$—in which it almost seems as if Jesus argues against the Messiah being the Son of David. His argument turns upon a quotation from Ps. 110:

> " Jehovah's oracle unto my Lord,
> Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

The line of discussion which Jesus takes is brought out by the following paraphrase: " The scribes and Pharisees allege that Messiah is David's son; but is that quite correct? What does David himself say in an important psalm? Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he calls the Messiah Lord—' The Lord said unto my Lord.' Now, if David thus calls Him Lord, whence is He then his son? " Jesus here assumes that this psalm is Messianic, and that David is in spirit referring to the Christ in the words " my Lord." We are not concerned with the discussion except to show that the purpose He evidently had before Him was not to deny that Messiah was to be David's son, but rather to insist that He was more—a Person different from, and greater than, the son of David. He was possibly

in this way endeavouring to point out the wrong conceptions they were entertaining concerning the Messiah; that, as a matter of fact, they were thinking too much of physical descent, and of a temporal ruler, and overlooking other attributes in the promised Messiah that were of far greater importance, and which they might have discovered in Himself. It is not necessary, however, to dwell further upon this point at this stage, as it will come up generally for consideration when we deal with the Messianic conception itself. It is quite clear that this discussion was initiated by Jesus, either, as St. Matthew puts it, as a challenge to the theologians of the day, or, as St. Mark's version suggests, for the purpose of instructing the people. In both cases really the intention indisputably was to lead their thoughts to a higher and truer idea of Messiah. The use of this title, however, coming so late in Christ's ministry would tend to confirm those impressions of His personality already formed by His followers rather than contribute anything that was essentially new.

CHAPTER VIII

MESSIANIC IDEALS

THE thoughts entertained regarding the Messiah about this time present a theme of considerable moment, and it is necessary to consider it before we come into direct touch with the declaration made at Cæsarea Philippi. Whatever notions on the subject were common among the Jews as a whole, would certainly be shared by the disciples; and just as soon as their curiosity concerning Jesus began to be awakened, they would be seeking for confirmation or otherwise of their preconceptions of the Messiah, in the life and conduct of their Master. Yet, although they were unaware of it, they and many of their contemporaries were looking at Him through spectacles that had been coloured by their previous religious training and education. Edersheim tells us (vol. ii. p. 160) that while "so far as we can gather from the Gospel narratives, no objection was ever taken to the fulfilment of individual prophecies in Jesus," yet "the general conception which the rabbis had formed of the Messiah differed totally from what was presented by the prophet of Nazareth." Later on we shall endeavour to ascertain what was the Messianic ideal before the mind of Jesus; just now, it may help us to discover this radical difference between Him and the rabbis, if we can find out in a general way what was the Messianic conception of the latter.

Perhaps we cannot do better than follow the example of the writer of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where, in setting before him the task of proving the superiority of Jesus over the angels, he makes appeal to certain psalms as specifically proving the superlative greatness of the Son. This is to us an illustration of the interpretation of such passages as they were commonly understood about the time of our Lord, and, consequently, reveals so far the Jewish ideal of Messiah. Every one of the psalms so quoted by this author singularly enough has the kingly and victorious idea as its dominant note. We must bear in mind the great influence poetry has always had upon a nation, and more especially upon a people like the Israelites, whose exigencies and national misfortunes drove them frequently to find solace and inspiration in these songs. The passionate patriotism, as well as the religious fervour, of the nation led their poets oftentimes to dream and sing of better, more glorious days; and through these inspiring strains the downtrodden, exiled people not seldom fed the flame of hope within their hearts and encouraged themselves by singing over these "Songs of Zion." We may expect to find their expectation of a coming Deliverer distinctly and beautifully enshrined in the psalms. We cannot trace it in its every phase as it is discoverable in the Psalter; the following summary will be, perhaps, sufficient:—

(1) Messiah as triumphant King over a glorious Kingdom: Ps. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132.

(2) The Messiah in affliction and suffering: Ps. 22, 69, 109, and perhaps 35, 41, 55.

(3) The Messiah as Son of Man: Ps. 8, 80, also 16

and 40, where the idea is found but not the name "Son of Man." We have the opposite in Ps. 146, where the expression is discovered but not the Messianic idea.

To these passages many others in the Old Testament can be added, but particularly those from the poets and prophets who refer to the future glory and greatness of Israel. Such, *e.g.*, as Isa. 60, in which the coming splendour and magnificence, as well as the complete triumph, of Zion and Jerusalem are described. Or the forty-ninth chapter, in which Israel is to become the servant of Jehovah, "to raise up the tribes of Jacob," and be a "light to the Gentiles." Or the fortieth, which calls for adequate preparation for the coming of the Lord, particularly applied in the Gospels to the appearing of the Messiah. Or the thirty-second and thirty-third, wherein are described the King in His righteous rule, and the revelation of His glory. We know also that there are passages in Malachi, Zechariah, Micah, and several other books of the Old Testament having references to the Messiah—all sounding loudly, clearly, and insistently what we may call the imperialistic note. It is true there are other passages pitched in a minor key whose strains are threatening, sad, and sorrowful. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah will immediately suggest itself to our minds —and all the references in that prophecy to the "suffering servant." Those psalms, too, which we have placed in the second group and which deal with the sufferings of Messiah, especially the twenty-second, and such a verse as Dan. 9^{26}, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself," etc., are particularly of this

plaintive character. Akin to these will be those pictures which reveal the Messiah as no political potentate, but a moral and spiritual reformer, such as Isa. 61 and Mal. 3. The question may be asked, seeing that there are such abundant indications that Messiah was to be "despised and rejected," to experience suffering and deep humiliation, How was it possible that the Jews so completely ignored such passages? Possibly we may answer that the other more glorious references are even more frequent and more emphatic than these, and, consequently, they would make a deeper impression upon the mind of the reader. Besides, they were just the very thing that the people wanted. When a man is in distress, it is something inspiring and hopeful for which he craves. Very likely any other nation placed in the same position as that in which the Jews often found themselves, would have acted in precisely the same way in this matter. More than one soldier in the recent Great War has made the admission, that the thought which often helped our men bravely to keep guard in the face of a watchful enemy was the memory of home, and expectation of coming days when war should be no more. When the people of Israel and Judah were overrun by their enemies, when their land was spoiled, and irrevocable destruction threatened everything that was dear, and when at last they were carried into captivity, it was not plaintive songs glorifying suffering, not even anthems in praise of heroic endurance unto death, or of steadfast patience under adversity, that they wished to sing. They, too, were often charmed by the prospect of a coming day when they should return to their own land; when a great Captain

should arise who would lead them on to victory, and when that victory should be so complete that "every boot of the booted warrior in the fight, and the garments rolled in blood; even all shall be for burning; for fuel of fire" (Isa. 9^5); or, as it is put, perhaps more plainly, in the short apocalypse found in the second chapter of this prophecy, and which so picturesquely portrays the ultimate triumph of Israel, the universality of Jehovah worship, and the unbroken peacefulness of Messiah's reign (Isa. 2^{2-5}). In the seventy-second Psalm we have a similar picture of the expectation of the Jews concerning the Messianic King and Kingdom. These portions of Isaiah, this Psalm, and other passages in the Old Testament which need not occupy us particularly, reveal, as we think, in a vivid way the Messianic ideal of the Jews. The religion of Israel was to rise above all other religions; it was to be so magnificently glorious as to draw the eyes of the wondering world, and the nations and kingdoms were to flock to Zion. There the all-victorious King was to reign in righteousness, yet in unbroken peace; for all peoples should bow down before Messiah, all should serve Him. He was to be the conqueror of the world, and His Kingdom was to be "an everlasting Kingdom." Still,

"He conquered but to save."

Considering the political fortunes of God's chosen people, remembering all the promises that had been made concerning them to the fathers of the race, from Abraham downwards, and recollecting also that many of these promises did not seem yet to have been fulfilled, the Jews would have been less

than human if they had not looked forward to the days of promised glory and splendour, and overlooked or forgotten those of gloom and suffering, which were foretold in certain passages of the Old Testament. Indeed, these had sometimes been interpreted as referring to the troubles and sorrows of Israel herself; and in any case, it is worthy of note that the two most impressive passages denoting suffering—Ps. 22; Isa. 53—conclude on a triumphant note. The Psalm declares, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." There is, it is true, a question of interpretation here, but it does not affect the point, which is, "Earth's mightiest are but mortals, and must yield their homage to the King of Kings" (Kirkpatrick, *The Psalms*, p. 122). The inspiring finish to Isa. 53 is very familiar: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. . . . Therefore will I divide him a *portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." And even if we adopt the translation of Delitzsch it does not lessen the inspiring close: "Because of the travail of his soul, he will see, will refresh himself: through his knowledge will he obtain righteousness, my righteous Servant, for the many, and their iniquities will he take upon himself. Therefore will I give him a share with the great, and with the strong will he share spoil." We see, then, that these passages which speak of suffering, distress, and death were not much dwelt upon by the Jews; and, moreover, that, even when we take them into account, the day of stress and storm is easily forgotten

in the promised serenity and glorious tranquillity of the approaching evening.

It only requires to be stated that the political and national, indeed we might add the religious, conditions of the Jewish people about the beginning of the Christian era were such as to induce the people to cling with still greater tenacity, if that was possible, to the idea of a Messiah whose Kingdom was to be political rather than spiritual. The Jews were always a restive nation, difficult to keep in subjection, and it would appear that after the success of the Maccabæan uprising they certainly became more eager to strike against the Roman power. It is but just to affirm that when their national hopes seemed most completely blighted and withered, then their patriotism burned with glowing ardour and even beauty. Possibly it was one of the few national virtues that remained to connect them with the more glorious days of the past. They were just as ardently longing in the days of Jesus Christ as they were in the time of Judas Maccabæus, that God would

> " Grant a leader, bold and brave,
> If not to conquer, born to save."

It is not, however, to be assumed that the Jewish Messianic ideal is exhausted in the figure of a great and successful military leader who was also to be a wise and just King. The nature of the Kingdom, to some extent, coloured the picture of the King which they fancied—*i.e* to say, an everlasting Kingdom required an everlasting King. To attain to world-wide sovereignty required a ruler who was himself omnipotent. The Jewish notion of Messiah, in

some of its aspects, may not have required a Divine Being; in others it most certainly did, and the people were partially prepared for such a Divine Ruler by the theocratic character of the first Kingdom of Israel. In any case, nothing less than a Divine Being will satisfy the description, or outline, of the Messiah child promised in Isa. 7, and more fully referred to in Isa. 9: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (7^{14}); "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (9^{6}). These titles were, as Principal G. A. Smith remarks, "too generous, perhaps, for a mere mortal, notwithstanding all the argument of Jewish and other writers who have endeavoured to explain away or water down the strength of the passage." Delitzsch also finds them to be Messianic, and there is little doubt they are so intended by the prophet. When we recall that names were often bestowed with deliberate significance among the Jews, and remember that this practice is particularly noticeable in the earlier Isaiah, we can easily see that those which we have just quoted must have possessed a rich and suggestive import to the people, such, indeed, as would lead them to regard Messiah as Divine. We are bound to insist that it is a most extraordinary conception or vision that describes a *child* as the *everlasting Father*, and the offspring of an unknown virgin as the mighty God, or Hero-God, if that is preferred. It is well-nigh impossible, at this date, to appreciate fully the influence such passages as these would

have upon the minds of the Jews in moulding their thoughts concerning the Messiah. Yet they are not the only ones of this nature. In Jer. $23^{5f.}$ we meet another Messianic reference in which the Lord is to raise unto David a Branch, "and his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (יהוה צדקנו). This is cited in the Midrash Miche 57*a* as one of the eight names of the Messiah. Now, none of the titles given in Isaiah, or elsewhere in the Old Testament, can excel this in suggestive significance. To realise that, we have only to think of the history of the word יהוה; and when we discover it deliberately applied to the Messiah, there seems only one conclusion possible, viz. that the King of David who was to come was also יהוה, who had been the Good Shepherd of Israel throughout all the past history—the Righteous and Holy God.

Bruce says: "The Messiah looked for by the Jews in general was merely a man, though a very superior one, the ideal man endowed with extraordinary gifts" (*Training of the Twelve*, p. 168). We doubt if that is quite in accordance with the facts presented in Old Testament history, and which have been just now briefly considered. Besides, the quotation itself presents its own difficulties of interpretation, for the "mere man" at the beginning of the sentence becomes in the next clause "a very superior one," and disappears altogether in the final clause, where we find an ideal man endowed with extraordinary gifts." Possibly this latter conception is not very far from the view we have been endeavouring to establish; but keeping it in mind, we do not very well see how Prof. Bruce was justified in stating that

"the Messiah looked for by the Jews in general was merely a man," taking this last phrase in its usual sense.

Such ideas as these titles would suggest, or as the glowing pictures which the prophets painted would inspire, were entertained by the people of Israel in the days of Jesus; and the higher the conception they formed of the Messiah, the more impossible must it have appeared that the Carpenter from Nazareth could be that Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, and Everlasting Father. It must soon have become evident to any man, that to fulfil the programme of the Jews, a person was required of far greater resourcefulness than Jesus could ever possibly possess. So that for Him to insist that He was Messiah must have appeared as the height of folly, because there seemed no way by which He could successfully play the part. And, recognising the situation as it existed, this may explain why our Lord did not straightway claim to be the long-expected One. If this be so, herein He showed His wisdom. His first work was to endeavour to dispossess the minds of men of those preconceptions that they had formed of Messiah and His Kingdom. It would be wrong to say, however, and yet it is sometimes affirmed, that the Messiah they anticipated was one of their own creating. Nay, indeed, it was quite otherwise. Most certainly they believed they had laid hold of the promises of God, and that in these they had abundant justification for the hopes they entertained of a redeemed and glorified Israel. Messiah was to restore all things. That they blinked at and overlooked passages which did not suit their view, we

know. Yet we do not marvel at this, because some of these appeared utterly opposed to the promises that had been given them throughout the ages. It might not be any exaggeration to state that the Old Testament practically revealed two Messiahs apparently inconsistent and irreconcilable—the Suffering Servant of Jehovah and Immanuel the Glorious King, Son of David. Their national circumstances led them to focus their whole thoughts upon the latter; and it became almost the life-work of Jesus to reveal to them the sublime grandeur and the historical reality of the former.

It will, perhaps, always remain a subject of debate at what point in the life of our Lord the consciousness came to Him that He was really and truly the Messiah. But whatever theory we may entertain, there is one thing which must have come early within the sphere of His consciousness—whom He was not, and never could be, the Messiah that the Jews of His day expected. It must have been soon—perhaps while He was yet in the workshop at Nazareth—that He became familiar with the common ideas cherished by His countrymen on this important matter; and no doubt some of the force of the "temptation" in the wilderness lay in this very direction, viz. that He must, if He were the "Son of God," "the anointed above measure," proceed now to tear up by the roots many of the beliefs and theories that had been held by His people for several centuries; that in some respects He was even about to contradict the glorious visions of the past, and blight the hopes of many in Israel as to the future.

Jesus early recognised the absolute necessity of

revealing a new Messianic ideal both by life and doctrine; and so far as St. Mark's Gospel is concerned, we may say by life rather than by doctrine. Prof. Curtis, in *History of Creeds and Confessions of Faith*, says: "In all the Gospels, conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the veritable Son of God, is represented not only as His own fixed possession and the basis of His ministry in all its many-sidedness, and as strengthened by the repeated Voice from Heaven. . . . The narratives further make it plain that it was a definite part of His purpose to elicit in time spontaneous acknowledgment of faith in His Messiahship spiritually understood in relation both to God and humanity" (p. 5). The Gospels show Jesus engaged in this work of awakening faith in Himself, as well as uprooting those misunderstandings that had been so long entertained; and in revealing to the disciples and to the world generally a fresh and truer conception of the Messiah. And strangely enough, this conception is found in those very passages of Scripture and prophetic pictures of sorrow, sacrifice, and suffering which the people had so completely ignored. At first, He allowed His own personality to exercise its own influence. There is no doubt that, as Prof. Curtis again remarks, "Faith in Jesus Christ personally would naturally precede faith in His Messiahship" (p. 5). Yet we know how free His methods were from all sensationalism, and from those tricks by which men sometimes endeavour to create an atmosphere for themselves. His primary duty, as we have seen, He regarded as preaching the Gospel. When we remember the task He had before Him we shall be able to form a better

estimate of the extreme importance of this work, and to appreciate the splendid opportunities for His purpose it presented. How He uses such opportunities and endeavours to bring the true idea of Messiah before the people is illustrated in Luke $4^{16ff.}$ It is significant that Jesus comments on Isa. 61 and not on the glowing, gorgeous picture of the chapter before, although both no doubt would be part of the lesson of the day. He desired, too, in His preaching to remove the errors that were abundant at the time and to fill the minds of the people with the living truth. He was always emphasising the need for repentance, righteousness, and of the importance of spiritual things. His life was an unfailing example of His doctrine. In all this He was bringing forth His Messianic ideal as a living reality in actual experience. But the "Anointed of God" was to possess wonderful power. So He revealed power, yet in such a way that this power was exercised in ministering to the needs of those who were distressed and sinful. The value of His life in manifesting to the disciples a new standard of human possibilities can hardly be over-estimated. Yet this was but another way of making known the Christ to them. Jesus began to show His thoughts of Himself as the true Messiah, by revealing Himself as the true man—One in which the Divine image is again reflected in all its brightness and perfection. It is this revelation which soon takes a hold upon the reader of the Earliest Gospel. The manhood of Jesus is so strange and wonderful, so dignified and perfect, that we often fail to discover the line dividing the human and Divine in Him, if there was any such line.

What He thought the Messiah was to be was what He Himself became. His life is His interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies concerning God's anointed. The multitudes were deeply impressed, and even influenced by His words, but men to-day are perhaps even more affected by His deeds; and by these we do not mean His miracles, but rather the holy life that He lived. His manner of living must soon have arrested the attention of the disciples as they watched Him day by day, studied Him in the varied scenes of His earthly activity, witnessed His complete devotion to God's will and absolute surrender of Himself to His mission; frequently their minds must have been excited to wonderment regarding Him. His compassion for those in distress; His sorrow, yet mercy for those in sin; His passion for righteousness; His thoughtfulness for others; His antagonism towards all forms of evil and wickedness; and always His great love for His fellow-men, must have deeply influenced the simple-minded Galilean peasantry among whom He carried on His most active services. This is how He conceived Messiah should act, and so it came to pass people were heard to say, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this (man) hath done?" (John 7^{31}). Even if we put the miracles which He did aside for the moment, Jesus interpreted life so differently from other men in His own manner of living, as to awaken the interest and curiosity of the disciples. As they observed His perfect morality, His marked humility, His abounding compassion, His meek submission to the Father's will, His intense spirituality, they must have been surprised to discover these sterling

and beautiful virtues so extraordinarily displayed by the Carpenter from Nazareth. Very likely they soon ceased to think of His associations with that city and trade. Thus by His own example He lifted their minds out of the old ruts, and helped them to appreciate the higher moral and spiritual values. The keynote of His life will be found in His own words, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt. 4^4). In the earlier days of His public ministry He does not seem to have concerned Himself or His followers either with the political or national history of the Jews, and any reference that takes place to these later is rather of a religious character. He is most careful to keep His own work free from all political colour and influence. His life and mission, as they are presented in the earlier sections of St. Mark's Gospel, show us a simple and sincere Man of great faith, piety and prayer, actively engaged in alleviating the distress of those who were suffering, and striving to uplift and encourage those who had fallen. Yet they also reveal a Teacher of the purest ethics and of the very highest religious aspirations.

Jesus, therefore, indicates the views He held respecting the Messiah by His own interpretation of life. The picture He gives us of the Christ is practical and very real. We might put this another way by saying that He took up those passages of Scripture of the plaintive, mournful type, concerning the Christ, which the Jews had neglected, and showed that these really mirrored forth very distinctly the true Messiah. At first He was too sagacious a teacher to emphasise the difference between His conception of that Person and that which

was entertained by the Jews. He was content to be an illustration in real life of those prophecies which had been ignored by them. The time came when He went a step further, and revealed to His followers His readiness to accept all that the prophets had spoken concerning Christ, and to show that there was nothing inharmonious in these utterances. Up to Cæsarea Philippi Jesus appears to have been satisfied to allow His life to show forth the truth about the Messiah; nor did He seem in haste to offer any instruction to His disciples concerning those errors and misapprehensions that He knew were generally entertained. His own example was the leaven which was to work at first, quietly and effectively. After Simon's confession, however, the positive note is undoubtedly sounded both clearly and distinctly. It is only after that event also that He plainly and unmistakably reveals His conception of Messiah, and shows that, rightly understood, there is no inconsistency between His view and that which the prophets portray; nor any such dissimilarity as one would expect from the cherished ideals entertained by the Jews. He, too, seeks a Kingdom—one which is everlasting. He, likewise, desires a renewed and glorified Israel. He seeks for freedom, conquest and glory; to establish a dominion which shall extend over all the world. He labours and strives for something far greater than anything they had dreamed of in their most sanguine moments. Upon the banner that He raises now before the gaze of His amazed and astonished followers, there is engraven this strange device wrought in letters red as blood: "Victory through suffering." This is the final thought which

Jesus imparts of His conception of the Messiah. But we have been anticipating, as the last few sentences more properly belong to the next section.

We have now in a general way surveyed the ground covered by Mark 1 to 8^{27}. Great events in the life and ministry of our Lord have passed before us; the thoughts of temptation have fallen away into the background, for every incident has but brought forth fresh testimony of His power, and, therefore, given fresh reason for belief that Jesus is the Christ. In a sense all this has been preparatory to that which is yet to come when the full claims of our Lord are to be presented to His followers without any ambiguity. Meanwhile, the enlightenment of their minds has proceeded but slowly. He has shown great patience and long-suffering, and has been sorely tried by disappointments and discouragements, yet faith and hope have not failed. The seed sown in tears and sadness has not all been unfruitful; some of it has fallen upon good soil, and the harvest is about to be reaped, the first-fruits being garnered in at Cæsarea Philippi.

CHAPTER IX

"THOU ART THE CHRIST"

HOWEVER patient our Lord might be in His teaching of the disciples, yet the days were passing, and soon there were indications—such as the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees, who appear on the scene as early as Mark 2—that the time of preparation could not be prolonged indefinitely. The leavening influence of His own life, moreover, as well as the effect produced by His miraculous work and by His preaching, must have produced eventually the desired effect. We may certainly assume there was private instruction given to the disciples which has not been preserved, and it seems quite probable that some of this would be designed, very especially, in furtherance of this preparatory work. It is not at all unlikely, judging from the account in Mark 8 and the parallel passage in Matthew 16, that the continued and determined opposition of the Pharisees had the effect of precipitating the course of events at this period. St. Mark informs us that the Pharisees were now joined by the Sadducees in their antagonism, and this unnatural combination would indicate that a crisis was approaching. However that may be, it would appear Jesus now desired to see what progress had been made in His work, both

among the people and in the case of the disciples also. It is but reasonable to suppose that the nature of the question which He now puts to them is a clear indication of at least part of the purpose He has had before Him in His public ministry thus far, which we have already seen was the impartation of a new and correct idea of the Messiah. There are various small differences of detail in the Synoptics in their narratives of the confession of Simon, but there is agreement upon the essential facts. It is well that both these points should be noted, for they are an assurance on this most important incident that, while Salmon may be right in believing the main particulars of the three records were derived from Q, yet each writer felt justified in adding such further facts as were within his reach. We see the beautiful appropriateness of St. Luke placing the scene in the atmosphere of prayer; and it is quite in keeping with the belief that St. Matthew designed his Gospel mainly for Jews, that we find him more lavish in his use of Messianic titles on this great occasion than the other two Synoptists. But there is no doubt the story as told so simply by St. Mark is exceedingly impressive, and appears very natural in the circumstances. We find the Petrine flavour here in the emphatic, yet brief, although very significant declaration, "Thou art the Christ." That is exactly what the Apostle would have been likely to say. It is the outcome of the personal influence, teaching, and labour of Jesus; these have in a manner forced the confession out of the very soul of Peter. The work of Jesus in tearing down, and building up afresh, has been thoroughly done, and it is drawing near its completion so far as the

Messianic revelation to the disciples is concerned. Their eyes have been opened, and they have begun to realise the truth, yet not in all its fulness and terrible significance. Dealing as we wish to do with Mark's report of this notable incident, we are brought face to face with the first plain and unmistakable recognition of Jesus as Messiah. We know Swete in his commentary on 8^{29} says: "This was not the first occasion on which the Messiahship of the Lord had been confessed by the twelve. Peter in particular had known who He was from the first (John 1^{41})." The proof offered hardly seems to support the statement, for it would appear that it was Andrew who asserted, "We have found the Messiah." In any case, in John 1^{41} the author appears to introduce matter which, according to the Synoptists, properly belongs to a later period. It is hardly likely a confession of Jesus as Messiah would precede His public activity. There appears no sufficient reason for altering the statement we have already expressed, that Simon's confession was the first public recognition of Jesus as Messiah on the part of the disciples, and Peter was undoubtedly gathering up the thoughts of his companions and putting them in a sentence when he said, "Thou art the Christ." Simpler words could not be employed to express such a profound truth. Bruce, in *The Training of the Twelve*, maintains: "Simon's confession, fairly interpreted, seems to contain these two propositions —that Jesus was Messiah and that He was Divine" (p. 167). Yes, that may be so, if we are dealing with the full records of all the Synoptists on the point, as he was doing; but if we are confined to St. Mark's, and its very simplicity attracts us and inclines us to think

it is the original record of the incident, then there is only one categorical affirmation in this earliest confession, viz. that Jesus is the Messiah. This was what our Lord desired, what He had been working for. Bruce says further: "That the famous confession uttered in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi really contains in germ the doctrine of Christ's divinity, might be inferred from the simple fact that Jesus was satisfied with it, for He certainly claimed to be the Son of God in a sense predicable of no mere man. But when we consider the peculiar terms in which He expressed Himself respecting Peter's faith, we are still further confirmed in this conclusion." He is no doubt quite right, but somehow one wants to get back to the plain and simple situation as revealed in St. Mark's Gospel, which, we are to remember, is the earliest. We are not satisfied that the thought of the divinity of our Lord was before the mind of St. Peter or of the other disciples on this occasion, and we question very much whether it was before the mind of Jesus either. In the Synoptics He is not ready to thrust such claims forward, and it is significant that He demanded nothing here. He asks two questions concerning Himself: the first, what the outside world thought of Him; the other, what His close companions believed regarding Him. The first answer is unsatisfactory; the second peculiarly gratifying. What is involved in this answer, what may be legitimately inferred from it, is what was involved in the acceptance of Him as Messiah—not alone as that Person was understood by the Jews, but as He was being revealed to the disciples by our Lord, and as He was still further to be made known

in the days to come. We have every reason to be satisfied with that, for we see it certainly satisfied Jesus. We would suggest that St. Matthew's addition, "the Son of the living God" (16^{16}), is an attempt to amplify the contents of the word "Messiah" as then understood by the Jews, and is a confirmation of what we have stated above, that they believed the Christ would be of Divine origin.

This declaration of Simon's has been regarded as one of the great landmarks, not only in the ministry of Jesus, but, perhaps we may venture to say, in the progress of spiritual religion also. It cannot be otherwise when we realise that these four words, "Thou art the Christ," signify the fulfilment of the dreams, hopes, and promises entertained, shall we say, for about two thousand years. Some will trace the beginning of these promises right back to Eden, when it was declared the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Certainly, generation after generation, century after century, looked forward with expectancy to the coming of the Lord's anointed. As we have seen, it was the inspiring theme of the poets of the past, and prophets had looked down the corridors of time, and in the far distance beheld Immanuel born of a virgin reigning over the everlasting Kingdom of righteousness. And when their prophecies were fulfilled, truly it was "without observation." In the gathering of the twilight, after the evening prayer was ended (Luke 9^{18}) and the toils of a busy day were over, when the storm-clouds of opposition were lowering on the horizon, and when it was realised that the time for instruction was now becoming very limited, in hope and fear—if that expression may be allowed—

Jesus put the momentous question which received the equally important answer that was to imply the confirmation of God's gracious mercy and goodness throughout the ages past and to come. The hour had at length struck for which men had waited so long, back to which so many have turned their eyes since, and towards which we believe the generations to come will turn with undiminished interest and reverence in their gaze. This is the first Christian confession of faith, brief though it is, and that in itself would be reason enough for treating it with profound respect. But if we may be pardoned for quoting Bruce again, he surely but states the truth when he affirms that Jesus "Assigned to the doctrine confessed by that disciple (Peter) the place of fundamental importance in the Christian faith" (p. 169). It cannot be denied that it rightly occupies that place. The faith which Jesus desired to awaken in His first disciples was faith in Himself as Messiah—as the revelation of the Father's love. It is that faith which He still desires to quicken into life in those who would yet be His disciples. Faith in the Person and office of Jesus Christ is still fundamental, and is only revealed by the Spirit of God.

Perhaps it would be convenient here to inquire whether there was not some subjective consideration that led Jesus to put this question to the disciples. It is not impossible that the circumstances of His public ministry were testing His own faith a good deal about this juncture. He had spent a considerable time in this work now, and, while outward results were not wanting, He knew very well that the general progress He had striven for had not yet been

obtained. He was aware also that the time for such labour was becoming very short, and even He found it extremely difficult to awaken the spiritual instincts of the people. They were willing to receive His favours, but not to accept His Spirit. Thus it is possible there may have arisen a crisis in the mind of Jesus. Reviewing His past work and its results, if these did not appear so satisfactory as He desired, He may have begun to question within Himself whether He had taken the right methods for the purpose He had in hand; whether, for instance, He had not somewhat obscured the Messianic teaching by want of positive utterances. And if He took a very gloomy view of the situation, He might even have asked Himself whether He had not been self-deceived in imagining Himself to be the Christ; so that this period may have furnished a very real crisis in the life's experience of Jesus. The want of abiding fruit may likewise have led Him to review the work and methods of the sower or the worth of the seed, and have even brought Him to a time of hesitation and doubt. There was one way to allay all anxieties, and to confirm Him in the course He had set before Him, or to alter this, if circumstances should so suggest. He would ascertain whether the effect He had really striven for had been actually secured, and when He received the answer of Simon, "Thou art the Christ," He found this as the breaking forth of the sun through the clouds of a threatening day. This would, to some extent, explain the very evident satisfaction which Simon's confession afforded to Him. His methods were justified, and confirmation was given to His own thoughts and ideas in every way. The fruit was not so

abundant as He expected; it was, however, there, and He was satisfied that in due time it would increase.

Twilight is of short duration in the clear atmosphere of the East, and darkness speedily follows upon the setting of the sun. Something similar to that now takes place in the story of the enlightenment of the disciples, for no sooner does the golden light of revelation break in upon Simon and his friends, than that light is extinguished and the darkness becomes palpable as before: "And he charged them that they should tell no man of him" (Mark 8^{30}). They had come to the realisation of an inspiring truth, which they would gladly have shared with their neighbours, and which indeed seemed to convey the duty of passing it on to others; but no, a ban of silence is laid upon them. For the present this important fact must be kept secret. We may only speculate as to the reason; and perhaps it can be put in a sentence—the disciples were ready for the revelation of this truth of His Messiahship, but the world was not yet fully prepared. What did the world think of Him? "John the Baptist, but some say Elias; and others, One of the prophets." It is remarkable to discover here there is not a single hint that the outside world thought He was the Messiah. He was a great man, a noted religious leader—nothing more. John the Baptist had been an outstanding personality, and there were striking similarities, as we have seen, between the teaching of Jesus and that of the Baptist. Therefore, some of the people, and among the number apparently Herod, thought Jesus was John marvellously raised from the dead; indeed, some of them may not have known about the Baptist's death, and so perhaps

confounded these two great teachers. There appears to have been a tradition of which the disciples were aware (Mark 9^{11}), that Elijah was to reappear before the coming of Messiah; and therefore others imagined that Jesus was Messiah's forerunner in the person of Elijah—the idea was no doubt based upon Mal. 4^{5}; while another class had only a vague notion that He was "One of the prophets." Quite clearly the work of preparation had not been sufficiently perfected in the outside world. In such circumstances it might only have prejudiced the position to have proclaimed His Messiahship publicly, and might also have so precipitated a crisis in the opposition of His enemies as to render His work for the future exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The revelation was consequently not yet to be given to the world, because it was not fit to receive it. But there is every probability that Jesus was influenced in His attitude at this time by the increasing hostility of the scribes and Pharisees, and having still much work to do, He did not desire to jeopardise it by any precipitate action or aggressive declaration. The standard of His Kingdom should be raised presently, but the time was not yet come. It was to be a cross, as He now proceeds to explain to His followers; and Messiah upon a cross is an idea they cannot accept. But, then, He shows them that suffering and death are a means to salvation and glory, and that death really opens the gate to life everlasting. Perhaps there may have flashed through His mind, as suggested by this reflection, the thought that the world might best be induced to recognise His Messiahship through His resurrection from the dead.

Now, although there was this specific declaration of the Messiah by Peter, acquiesced in, no doubt, by the other disciples, we are not able to assert positively what it exactly implied in their case. It is not improbable that at the moment even Simon did not perceive the full contents of his confession. Had it been otherwise, it is quite clear he would not have taken up the attitude of "rebuking" his Master, which he is reported to have done. One believes that if he had understood fully the affirmation he had just made, he would not have fallen into that error. His mistake certainly called forth the sharp reproof of Jesus upon him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." It recalls the temptation scene in the wilderness, and possibly the connection is more real than appears on the surface. It may be that this very idea of suffering itself presented a temptation to Jesus against which He had to fight most strenuously. The scene in the Garden of Gethsemane shows how abhorrent it was to Him; and it is not unlikely that, in this moment of exaltation, Satan should endeavour to strike again, using the warm, friendly words of Peter as his instrument. Moreover, we ought not to forget that while He was the Son of God and the Son of Man, He was also the Son of Mary, and had been trained up in His earliest days in all the faiths and beliefs of His people respecting the Messiah. The conditions of His life at Nazareth may have had their influence upon Him later, and may also have provided vulnerable points for the great adversary. As the first temptation immediately succeeded the uplifting scene of the Baptism and turned upon the words, "If thou be the Son of God," which had been spoken to Him

from heaven, so a fresh trial of strength between Him and His adversary might conceivably have occurred at this point, after the inspiring confession at Cæsarea Philippi, turning upon the words, "If thou be the Messiah, if thou be the Christ, why suffer? Why not fulfil the rôle prescribed by the prophets and the poets, and conform to the expectation of the Jews?" If the foregoing assumption is accepted, it would explain the sharpness of the rebuke now administered to Peter.

The results of Peter's confession were at once noticeable; the conditions that had existed between Jesus and His disciples up to this time could never hereafter be the same. The whole record of their relations with one another, not only as revealed in St. Mark's Gospel, but also in the others, shows that very early they began to regard Him as a Man, different and distinct from other men. They never seem, for example, to have placed Him on a level with themselves. Whatever uncertainties they may have entertained in the past as to His Person—and there must have been times when they hardly knew what to think—henceforth He was to them the Messiah. Nevertheless, there was much that still required to be done in the way of their further enlightenment, much to be built upon this confession as a foundation. Something, certainly, had been accomplished already; but they did not find it easy to unlearn their lessons of earlier days. In particular, they could not understand the necessity which demanded Christ should suffer, nor how His Kingdom was to be advanced by that suffering. This remained an enigma to them right up to the very end. The resurrection, and Pentecost, were needed to open their eyes.

After the confession of Peter a new theme seems to have chiefly occupied the teaching of Jesus. Hitherto He had made the "Kingdom" the principal topic; perhaps in His public teaching He does so still, but we observe that the private instruction of the disciples occupies a more prominent place than formerly, and that He now wishes to reveal with increasing distinctness the kind of Messiah He is to be. In the earlier part of His teaching, we might say generally, the theme is the nature of the Kingdom; in the later it is the Person of the King. When we allow for the length of the Gospel, St. Mark records a comparatively large number of miracles, and thereby lays considerable emphasis upon that aspect of the work of Jesus; it is therefore significant to find only two occur after Cæsarea Philippi, or three, if we count the cursing of the fig-tree. The other two are the healing of the child with dumb spirit, and restoring sight to blind Bartimæus. It is likewise noteworthy that every chapter except the thirteenth, after "the confession," has distinct references to the new aspect of the Messiah as One who is ordained to suffering and travail of soul. Thus does Jesus emphasise this conception in His teaching to the disciples, and apparently because He is so much occupied with their instruction, His ministry now becomes less public, and assumes a much more private character. This change may also be attributable to the more pronounced opposition that was now manifesting itself. It would probably be correct to say that, so far as the development of the Christological idea is concerned, He allowed His life to bear witness, and create its own impression up to a certain point; but after

that had been reached, clearly and distinctly He dwells upon His future work as the "Suffering Servant" of Jehovah. Hence, we find in the latter section of the Gospel such statements as $10^{33ff.}$: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again." This may be taken as a summary of the teaching of Jesus respecting Himself as Christ at this time. The prospect, dreadful as it appeared, does not seem to have depressed Him, for long ago He had realised that His way must be that of self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, the picture He painted in the words just quoted could not have been very attractive to the disciples. It was intolerable to imagine that the Messiah, around whose person they, like every other Jew, had woven such golden dreams, was to be rejected by the leaders of the people and by the ecclesiastical authorities. They found it almost impossible to believe those in authority would consign Him to death! Nay worse, that they would hand Him over to the Gentiles. Messiah in the hands of the Romans! What a blight upon all their hopes! What a test, too, of their loyalty and faith! We could hardly blame them if at this critical moment they began to wonder whether Jesus was different from other Messiahs who had already come and raised the standard of revolt against the Romans unsuccessfully. But there was always this difference, so far, Jesus had not raised

any such standard, and there was no suggestion that He intended to do so. Nay, rather He said, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" (Mark 12^{17}). What exactly He meant by saying, "And the third day he shall rise again," they did not understand. Indeed, so overwhelmed were they with the other prospect of suffering and death, that for the present their minds did not appear to lay hold of this thought of an immediate resurrection. It is a tribute to the sterling trust and confidence of the disciples, as well as to their intense personal loyalty, that their faith in these circumstances stood the test, and that they remained attached to their Master with unabated devotion. It appears extremely probable that they did not fully understand all this teaching, or else that they regarded its fulfilment as somewhat remote, otherwise why should the sons of Zebedee seek, in the way they did, preferment in His Kingdom? ($10^{35ff.}$).

But there is another advance here in the teaching of Jesus. He really raises His standard after Cæsarea Philippi and calls the multitude to it. The Kingdom for which He is striving is to be won, not by His sufferings alone, but also by the sacrifices of those who will follow Him, who are ready to espouse His cause. "And when he had called the people with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (8^{34}). Strange Kingdom this in which the King and all His subjects must pass in triumphal procession through the archway of suffering, hardship, adversity, and self-sacrifice! Yes, and when they have suffered to the full, there may not be forthcoming the honours and

rewards which some of them were seeking. James and John might be baptised with His baptism, might drink even of His cup; but it did not follow they would sit on His right and left hand in Glory. It is quite clear now that Jesus begins to see the end for Himself, which was but the beginning for His people. Whither He leads they must follow; Master and disciple alike must bear the cross before they can wear the crown. How different was the prospect now revealed from that which they had long entertained! Dark clouds were gathering on the horizon, but as yet they were somewhat in the distance, and so the disciples were undaunted. Jerusalem was a place to shun henceforth, for clearly it was the centre of danger.

CHAPTER X

THE TRANSFIGURATION

TRAVELLERS tell us that on the way leading over the Pyrenees from France to Spain a point is reached which affords a magnificent view. Looking back from the summit to which he has ascended, the wayfarer can trace out with much distinctness the road over which he has passed. Its rugged ascents, its deep gorges, all lie under his eye, reminding him of the difficulties which have been successfully overcome in his upward journey, and assuring him that he has now attained the crest of the ridge. Contemplating the prospect in front, he discovers sharp descents into the valley, which sometimes appear even dangerous; frowning precipices and shadowy defiles are distinctly observable; and beyond these the fair and fruitful fields of Spain. There was something similar to this in the experience of the disciples. When they had reached the sublime Christological heights revealed in the confession at Cæsarea Philippi, they had but a little distance farther to travel until they came to the summit of revelation regarding the Person of Christ. One or two valleys of disappointment had, however, to be negotiated before this crest had been fully attained. We believe the most complete

unfolding, the absolutely superlative manifestation of our Lord's glorious personality, was found on the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples' experiences of Him, as we have seen, were all in an ascending series. Their knowledge of Him had been now wonderfully broadened and deepened. Perhaps it would be justifiable to say that, at first, they had followed Him partly because He appeared to have taken up John the Baptist's work. Now they were convinced He was the Messiah, although they could not reconcile that belief with His statements about suffering. This was as far as some of them, in the meantime, were intended to go; for them the future would provide for the clearer interpretation of the full contents of the Messianic ideal as Jesus was now making it known to them. Three of them, however, were to reach the very extreme height of revelation, and share in an incident which would ever afterwards affect their whole view of Christ, and the effect of which they would never forget. Peter, James, and John alone participated in the Transfiguration scene. They had been selected already by Jesus as His special companions, or perhaps witnesses—as, for example, when He restored the daughter of Jairus—and they were designed yet again to take a part in that indescribably pathetic scene in Gethsemane. The fact that these men were destined to occupy leading positions in the future church, perhaps furnishes some reason for the choice. The effect of the experience on the "Holy Mount" upon two of them is traceable, we believe, in their later writings. The words in the fourth Gospel (1^{14})—"And we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father"

—many scholars think have a probable reference to the Transfiguration, and this probability is much enhanced if we take the basal idea of the word δοξα (as Prof. H. A. A. Kennedy suggests) from the Old Testament. The shekinah at first was particularly the manifestation of δοξα; and the Transfiguration, as it is described in the Synoptic Gospels, was surely a shekinah. This is supported by a translation of John 1^{14} into Hebrew: ודבר נהיה בשר וישכן בתוכנו ונחזה כבודו ככבר יחיד וגו׳. The use of שכן and כבד here is noticeably in the same association, as is found in many places in the Old Testament. More direct and specific is the passage in 2 Pet. $1^{17f.}$: "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." There can be no doubt that if these words were not written by St. Peter, they were written by some person who wished to represent himself as Peter, and the reference in these two verses to the Transfiguration is in such a way as would have been done by the Apostle. However, we must not delay with that. What we are concerned with at this point is, to show that the experience referred to in Mark 9^{1-8} evidently made an indelible impression upon the memories of those who passed through it, and that clearly they looked upon it as an actual occurrence.

The outstanding difficulty about the Transfiguration is to explain how it could have possibly taken place—that is to say, to account for it on rational grounds. There are several ways of

approaching that difficulty. First, we may take up the rationalistic position which, commencing with the hypothesis that everything must be reduced to laws of reason and harmonised with ordinary human experience, refuses to acknowledge anything transcendental in Jesus or His work. Whatever, therefore, is proposed to be such must be discarded, and that upon any and various grounds. Some of these grounds seem rather unworthy, as, for example, those of Paulus and Schleiermacher, who appear to have regarded the incident we are now considering as a piece of play-acting, Jesus Himself being the stage manager. There is more reverence, it may be admitted, in the mythological theory of Strauss, accepted apparently by Keim. We have already dealt with it. Some hold the Transfiguration to have been but a dream or a vision in sleep; and still others, that it is an allegory with the object of showing the high opinion the disciples now had of Jesus, and to indicate His relation to the Old Testament. The latest view is that it is symbolic. Menzies in *The Earliest Gospel* says: "The following scene (the Transfiguration) is reported by men who were confessedly in great agitation when they witnessed it, and who were yet well aware that what they saw was not reality but vision. It is to be regarded as symbolic, and the symbolism is to be recognised first of all in the position this narrative occupies in the context of all three Synoptists. It is after Jesus had made up His mind to go to Jerusalem, and possibly to encounter a fate which to the ordinary Jewish mind would entirely destroy His claim to be the Messiah or in any way a chosen instrument of deity; it is at this moment that He

puts on to the eyes of His most intimate friends heavenly radiance, and appears as one whose true nature is not to be judged by his human mien or his outward fortunes. It is then that his figure becomes framed to his friends' eyes in the same picture with the principal figures of the sacred history of Israel: that of the great Lawgiver and that of the great Prophet." It seemed better to transcribe the whole paragraph because of its importance and suggestiveness, as well as on account of the fact that it no doubt reflects the latest view. We have no desire to be hypercritical, but there are one or two small points of fact which require to be referred to first of all. Menzies says the "scene is reported by men who were confessedly in great agitation when they witnessed it." Does that quite accurately describe the situation? He is dealing with the report in "the Earliest Gospel" (St. Mark's), and the only ground for his statement is 9^{6}, "For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid." If they were afraid, something very unusual was causing that fear; their terror is striking evidence that they were fully alive to all that was taking place. There is absolutely no suggestion of fear, or agitation, or anything of the kind, until the experience through which they were passing caused it. One would like to know whether Prof. Menzies would have denied any objective reality to the Transfiguration, or if he considered it was only a subjective experience? Reading over his own translation of the passage (Mark 9^{2-8}), we fail to find any evidence in support of his statement that the men who reported the scene "were yet well aware that what they saw was not reality but vision."

That appears to be contradicted by the words of Peter, " And at this Peter says to Jesus, it is a good thing that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah " (Menzies' translation). This suggestion to erect tents was so practical as to indicate that the scene was very real. The subsequent references by John and Peter mentioned above convey the same impression. Then, we would also wish to know what exactly is implied in the words, " it is at this moment that he puts on to the eyes of his most intimate friends heavenly radiance." Does this mean anything, if it does not indicate a real change in the outward appearance of Jesus? If, however, it only suggests that their inward vision was so brightened as to enable them to behold the heavenly character of the choice Jesus had made in becoming the suffering Messiah, then it certainly appears strange that three separate individuals were affected in their minds in precisely the same way. It was a rare coincidence that presented to their inner consciousness the same picture, and which produced exactly the same effect upon them all. Not often in actual experience do we meet with an instance of three sleeping men dreaming exactly the same dream, or seeing any absolutely identical vision. This, like the other explanations, hardly seems to clear away the difficulties, but rather creates others equally hard to solve. The same objection to a symbolical interpretation of this incident holds here as has already been urged in the case of the withered fig-tree—it is not in St. Mark's style. Up to this point the story he has been telling is lifelike, vivid, real. Examples of the

activities and powers of Jesus pass swiftly before us, and we are not prepared for this sudden introduction of symbolism, and feel reluctant to accept it as an explanation of the Transfiguration unless greater reasons are offered for doing so.

Let us suppose the three documents, Mark 9^{2-8}, Matt. 17^{3-8}, and Luke 9^{28-36}, were laid before us for examination and investigation as to their reliability. The very first thing we ought to do is to free our minds from all prepossessions and bias —abandon all preconceived theories, and as carefully and critically as possible examine the evidence in support of this supposed transfiguration, and thereby ascertain whether it is to be depended upon. Now we have in this case probably three sources that agree in the main facts of the story. Salmon says: "I am disposed to conjecture that we have in Matthew the form in which it had been told in Q, and that St. Mark has retained some of the vividness of expression in which Peter related the event. The close relation between St. Matthew's account and St. Mark's is manifest; but it is to be noted that St. Mark speaks of a voice from the cloud, without having previously told of any cloud. It seems to me that this is best explained by the supposition that St. Mark is copying not St. Matthew, but the authority whence St. Matthew drew. St. Luke's account is so much fuller that I do not set it on line with the other two." Does not Dr. Salmon fall into a slight slip here in stating that Mark "speaks of a voice from the *cloud*, without having previously told of any cloud"? The seventh verse reads: "And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out

of the cloud"—identical, so far as reference to the cloud is concerned, with Matt. 17^5, and thus making the similarity between Matthew's and Mark's report even greater than Salmon recognises. Now, if Matthew's account represents Q, Mark's will represent that plus Peter's recollections (*i.e.* accepting Salmon's position), and Luke's Q plus some material obtained from an independent source. We have thus the report from the original source, whether that is Q or Mark, supplemented by independent matter from two other sources. We must add to this the references in John 1^{14} and 2 Pet. 1^{17}, and this seems ample testimony to support the reliability of the story. There are few facts in the New Testament better attested than this. It is too much, in the circumstances, to expect us to believe that the story was all due to a vivid imagination, or to the mythological tendency that is supposed to have been so active towards the close of the first or beginning of the second century. We cannot very well evade the conclusion to which the evidence before us points, viz. that there must have been some historical basis for the incident; and as investigators we cannot do otherwise than accept it, unless we can disprove this evidence. No doubt we cannot explain how the thing was possible; no doubt also we cannot explain every detail of many other things which happen every day. We are not aware that anyone can exactly explain what life is, but we shall not, therefore, deny that it is a reality. It is quite possible that the average person could not perhaps expound in detail how a wireless message is carried to the other side of the world, but the proof is too overpowering to permit us to

deny the fact. So it appears to be here. The truth is, this occurrence seems to have been phenomenal, and no explanation, possibly, will harmonise it with our familiar laws of reason. To the man who refuses to believe in the transcendental there is a formidable difficulty here, for the confirmation is unquestionably strong, and if he be honest he must recognise that; simply to reject it, to explain it away, or to minimise it is hardly fair criticism. To the man of faith the difficulty is perchance somewhat less, for in the last resort he feels he must accept the evidence, even though he is unable to account for the occurrence itself. Rank materialism will not hesitate to deny that there is anything supernatural, to use a familiar word, and consequently it must reject a great deal in both the Old and New Testaments. It is an easy way to get rid of a difficulty; but after all, is it really a *reasonable* method? There is another point we must bear in mind—this instance of Divine glory being manifested on the Mount of Transfiguration is paralleled by the experience of Saul of Tarsus at his conversion near Damascus; and this experience was so real to him that it completely changed the whole current of his life. We have no alternative, therefore, but to accept the trustworthiness of the story on the evidence produced, even though to our great regret we cannot explain it.

Some light might be thrown upon it, however, if we had all the details of the experiences and incidents that took place in the six or eight days separating the Transfiguration from Peter's Confession. It was then that Jesus began in plain terms to inform the disciples of the suffering which

awaited Him at Jerusalem. This, as we have seen, was bound to have a depressing effect upon them all. Then, too, Peter had been sharply rebuked, and James and John informed that He could not grant the preference which they sought in His Kingdom. We may well believe that the necessity for thus treating these favourite followers, who were presently to be charged with great ecclesiastical responsibilities, was a grief to Jesus. Keen disappointment must have been felt all round, for clearly this was the "black week" in their experience, and perhaps we cannot adequately appreciate the strain under which they were all living—but surely in particular Jesus and the three disciples, Peter, James, and John. We believe, then, that the Transfiguration was somehow intended to help these three especially. We may well conclude that their faith was being tested to the breaking-point, and so the vision was granted, that they should not be tried above that which they were able to bear. Perhaps St. Luke is right in placing the occurrence after a period of prayer engaged in by our Lord. He certainly had much to harass and perplex Him at this period. In addition to those things just now referred to, we may be sure that He was conscious of the disappointment He was creating in not being able to take up the Messianic rôle expected by the Jews, and the disciples along with them. He was grieved by their want of spirituality, disappointed with their contentment with earthly things instead of the heavenly He offered. The open hostility of His countrymen, who should have accepted Him as their Saviour, and the imminent and humiliating end of all His earthly labours at Jerusalem, must

have greatly affected Him at this time. Everything was out of joint, and He found now, as He had discovered often before, that prayer was His best refuge and strength in the time of trouble. This experience was to the four particularly concerned what the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to the modern Christian—a communion season bringing comfort for the present, and strength and hopefulness for the future. Shepherds beheld the indescribably celestial glory shining in the heavens on the night when Jesus was born as a babe full thirty years before, and now when His earthly life is drawing to a close, fishermen are amazed and wonder-struck by the vision of glory they behold on the Mount of Transfiguration. Need we doubt that there was something real in this occurrence? Since God was in Christ Jesus, why might not heaven and earth meet, if only for a short spell, and Jesus take upon Him the glory which He had from before the foundation of the world? (John 17^5). And for Him, once more, there is a voice of approval, no doubt to suit the condition of His mind and soul at this time, in almost the same words as at the baptism. He had chosen the hard and difficult way of making the Messiah known; it entailed an agony—we do not mean merely physical—such as we cannot understand; and so the voice from heaven declared once again, "This is my beloved Son," bringing confirmation of what lay behind and inspiring fortitude for the darker days to come. The suggestive and endearing reference in the use of the words "beloved Son" would be particularly comforting to the heart of Jesus, and raise up many tender and sweet memories. We may conclude

from the reference in Luke 9^{31} that Moses and Elijah appear for precisely the same purpose of strengthening and preparing Him for the ordeal of Calvary that now approaches, although the subject of conversation is not mentioned in either Matthew or Mark. The appearance of these two Old Testament worthies is as difficult for us to explain as is the Transfiguration itself. We can only fall back on the suggestion again, that the whole thing had for its object the alleviation of the critical conditions then existing, and the preparation for the more awful days to come.

Once more the command of silence is laid upon His three companions, and, as before, the injunction seems inexplicable. We think it would have been most helpful if Peter, James, and John had been allowed to tell what happened, to the other disciples. But not a word is to be said about it "till the Son of Man were risen from the dead." We can only hint as an explanation of this silence, that possibly Jesus saw the experience would not have been understood until after the eyes of the disciples had been opened by the fact of His resurrection. It is vain to inquire further when there is no clue given; we might conjecture and be very far wrong. The setting of this incident is in an atmosphere of reverence and sanctity, which, we think, only finds its parallel in the scene laid in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Transfiguration seems the highest point in the Christian revelation respecting Jesus, for in some respects it appears to anticipate even the resurrection and the glory of the ascension. No more impressive experience could come to Peter,

James, and John until heavenly glory should be fully unveiled, and they should see "face to face" the "King in His beauty." From this point onward they are descending into the valley. Suffering, humiliation, and degradation are words now often on the lips of Jesus—He is to be despised and rejected both by the elders and the people. And so the clouds gather, as they often do, almost on the mountain-top itself. In our Gospel from this point onward, much more clearly and distinctly Jesus now applies to Himself the statements of Isaiah concerning the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. This becomes the dominant and persistent note of the last section of His ministry and the last half of the Gospel. It raises problems in the minds of the disciples which baffle them, and just because there appear to them now such violent and irresolvable discords in this combination of Messiah and suffering, their thoughts are only the more occupied with it. Again and again Jesus returns to it, as if it had an irresistible fascination even for Himself. Often He is disappointed and perplexed by their slowness of understanding. Still, although the Gospel is pitched now in a minor key, there is a plaintive sweetness and soothing peacefulness that indicate a spirit of calm resignation on the part of our Lord. Manifestly He has faced the idea of suffering and conquered it. His last fight certainly has not been fought, but He has fearlessly looked upon His enemy, and has not weakened the very least in His resolution. He descends without fear into the valley, for beyond it He has seen victory, and the entrancing glory of the fields celestial.

CHAPTER XI

JESUS AS A REFORMER

PERHAPS this will be a convenient place to pause in the development of our main subject so that we may consider, in a general way, the attitude which Jesus maintained to the common affairs of life as He found them existing at the time of His entrance upon public work. There is no doubt that the ministry of John the Baptist was really a great moral and religious movement, and the interest Jesus took in it shows that He quite understood that, and was concerned about such work. John, however, does not appear to have come into conflict with the Jewish rulers, while Jesus did; there must have been, consequently, something in the teaching of the latter which was more objectionable to them than in that of the former. We have already seen that His Messianic views did not at all coincide with theirs; but that difference was more accentuated at the close of His ministry, and was not the cause of the opposition against Him at first. We know that as early as the second chapter of Mark, the scribes objected to the claim that our Lord had power to forgive sins, and that from this point onward they are generally represented as being hostile to Him. We must, therefore, endeavour to ascertain whether

there were any other features of His work particularly objectionable to the religious leaders of that time, and very briefly consider Jesus in the aspect of a Reformer carrying on a movement of very great importance, and sometimes of very considerable extensiveness. This will embrace a brief inquiry into His attitude to the existing order of things (1) in regard to religion, (2) ethics, (3) social economics, and (4) politics.

1. The attitude of Jesus to the Jewish religion.

It is extremely interesting as well as of much importance to remember that Jesus never took up any hostile position towards the old religion in which He had been brought up. We find Him, wherever He went, and as long as He was permitted to do so, attending the synagogue services and taking a part in them. He appears to have been present at some of the more important feasts of the Jews in Jerusalem, and it seems likely was a worshipper at the temple. There are several references to His being in the House of God and teaching there in the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters of St. Mark's Gospel. We observe that these are all placed during the last week of His public ministry, but we have no reason to suppose that He was not present on other occasions and at other feasts; indeed, we discover quite a number of passages in the fourth Gospel in support of that idea. There is nothing in St. Mark's Gospel to suggest that Jesus had the least antipathy towards the Jewish religion as such. Instead of that, He appears to have taken part in its services whenever possible.

There is, however, one incident recorded in Mark 11[16ff.] which might lead us to suppose He did

not accept the prevailing system or order in regard to the existing temple worship. This is the record of the cleansing of the temple, which probably occurred during the last week at Jerusalem. The story as told by St. Mark is rich in details. Jesus, after having publicly entered into the Holy City as Messiah—riding upon a young ass—passed onward to the temple, whither the crowds seem to have followed Him (Matt. 21^{15}). St. Mark states He "looked round about upon all things" (11^{11}), and then departed back to Bethany because the "even was come." He appears to have formed the resolution to visit the temple again next day, and purge it of the unholy traffic which He saw being carried on therein. But nothing that He did on the second day—when "He cast out them that bought and sold in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers"—could suggest the least disrespect for the sacred house or its worship. One of the accusations made against Him at His trial was that He had spoken evil against the temple (Mark 14^{58}); but that was clearly a misunderstanding. Jesus, in cleansing the temple, showed that He was zealous for purity of worship there, and desired that nothing inconsistent therewith should be done in the Holy House: all which goes to support the idea that He not only accepted the old institutions, but was much attached to them. He was an ardent Reformer up to the point of wishing to have those things that were inharmonious with the religious and spiritual character of the temple service entirely removed; but in endeavouring to do that He was only restoring the House of God to its original purpose.

In thus acknowledging the temple and its services,

He was also acknowledging the ritual, at least to some extent, that was engaged in so elaborately there. What part He took in this is not definitely known. We cannot be sure whether He ever presented an offering or sacrifice, Himself. The inference from the observance of the Passover feast would lead us to suppose that, when in Jerusalem, He conformed to the usual customs of the temple. It is extremely probable that if He had in any way refused to observe the laws and traditions of the Jewish religion, such refusal would have provided an item in His indictment before the Council, as well as, perhaps, in His trial before Pilate. The absence of any hint of want of conformity leaves it open to us to infer that He was careful to acquiesce in the principal ceremonies and rules in operation at the time. It was really only what He regarded as the abuses of the system that Jesus spoke against. Positively, in Mark 1^{44} we find Him recommending the leper, whom He had just cleansed, carefully to observe the ritual prescribed in such a case. This is the only instance of the kind. Stevens says: "It is certain that Jesus laid no stress upon sacrificial rites, else he could not have been so silent on the subject" (*The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 52). But Jesus did not require to lay any stress upon these. We know they were abundantly observed at the time, in a formal and heartless way. We also are aware that these rites were designed to pass away immediately. Did Jesus oppose them? The answer appears to be, no. Did He try to impart a new spirit, new life, to them? We should be disposed to say, yes. In support of that, we would urge that the eating of the Passover Lamb, for example, was not the mere formality

in the case of Jesus which it was in the case of many Jews even of good standing at that time. The moral and spiritual significance underlying many of these ceremonies was discerned, understood, and sympathised in by Him; He found the essence of the act in these qualities, while to the average worshipper of the period virtue was discovered in a scrupulous observance of the details of ritual. But because of this deeper insight, Jesus had a more elastic view of the operation of the law of ritual. He found true observance to be in the spirit instead of the letter. This, inevitably, brought Him into conflict with the Jews of the Zealot type, but it shows Jesus maintained a respectful attitude towards the great Mosaic economy. Although we may desire very much to know the mind of our Lord respecting the sacrificial ritual of His time, and especially as to its perpetuation or abandonment in the near future, there is practically no information in St. Mark's Gospel to satisfy our craving. The word "sacrifice" is only found twice in the Gospel—that is according to the A.V.—and only once if we follow the R.V.; the latter omits the clause, "and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" (9^{49}), in accordance with some of the very important MSS., but gives a note of that reading in the margin. It is of no importance for our purpose whether it is retained or omitted, as it has no bearing upon the particular question of Jesus and sacrifices. Neither, indeed, has the other reference where the word occurs (12^{33}), "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt

offerings and sacrifices." These are not the words of Jesus, but of a scribe who came to Him and put the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?" But, perhaps, they exactly express the position and views of our Lord, that love was the fulfilling of all law; His response to the scribe marks His approval of the attitude of the former: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." We can only conclude from the general tenor of the Gospel narrative, that, in relation to the existing religious order, Jesus adopted the position of that of a pious Jew. His worship in its every act was characterised by unusual sincerity and fervency, and what was empty form to many, was full of intense spiritual suggestions to Him. His text-book was the Old Testament. He accepted its teaching with veneration, but He did not hesitate to show that sometimes the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life.

Distinctively there are three directions in which Jesus appeared deliberately to act and teach contrary to the prevailing traditions and practices of His countrymen. These were in regard to Sabbath observance, fasting, and ceremonial purification. Objection was taken against the disciples plucking the ears of corn with which to appease their hunger as they passed through the fields on a Sabbath morning. He repels this objection by a reference to "what David did, when he had need," how that he actually violated the sanctity of the tabernacle by taking the shew-bread, reserved for the priests alone. The argument of Jesus is not exactly that the end justifies the means, but that the need justified the act, because man is of infinitely more value than any such law. It is this that He has in

His mind when He says, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath day." This was a new doctrine in the ears of His opponents. Their view was that the law must be obeyed in its every letter; and the Sabbath had, as a matter of fact, become a burden rather than a pleasure. Instead of man being master of it, the rabbis had by their traditions and laws made it master of him. Jesus here indicates that the Sabbath was originally made for man's enjoyment and happiness—a view that had been entirely obscured. Again, in $3^{2ff.}$, He comes into conflict with His Jewish adversaries respecting Sabbath observance. It is a question now of His own action, whether He would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath or not. He had already healed a person possessed with an unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum; but we may suppose His enemies were surprised on that occasion; possibly that is why they watch Him so closely now. But He has nothing to conceal. He challenges them, maintaining that the Sabbath is a day on which good deeds may be done, and since this healing is a good act, it is no violation of the spirit of the Sabbath to perform it. There can be no doubt, however, that generally the Jewish leaders and some of the people resented what they regarded as the lax views of Jesus as to the sanctity of the Sabbath, and this was one of the main, as well as earliest, reasons for the hostility which was kindled against Him.[1]

Our Lord does not appear to have been orthodox in His attitude to the publicans and sinners (2^{15}) or in regard to fasting (2^{18}). In respect of the latter, He was not even so strict as John. Jesus seems to

have laid no injunction upon His disciples to fast. Verses 16–18 of chapter 2 show that He did not regard it as an item of ceremony to be performed at certain stated intervals and on particular occasions. This is how it was esteemed by the Jews. They fasted according to a programme; and their performance was as lifeless as a time-table usually is. Jesus looked upon fasting as the outward expression of the inward sorrowful condition of the soul. A man could not fast to order. If there was to be anything genuine and sincere in the observance, it must be rather a time of personal suffering, a period of afflicting one's soul before God. He defends His disciples from the attack of the scribes by pointing out that the occasion was not one for fasting—it was not a time of sorrow, but of joy. He was the bridegroom, and as long as He was with them, fasting would be utterly out of place; when He was taken away from them their sorrow itself would bring a severe enough fast. And it was true. We may well believe that during the period of the Crucifixion, and even until the announcement of the Resurrection, these disciples fasted in grief and bitterness of soul. These thoughts of Jesus were essentially different from those entertained by contemporary religious teachers, and of course differentiated Him from them in a marked degree. Again, we note Jesus imports a spiritual and even natural significance into fasting that the common observance then lacked, and without which it was practically worthless as a religious observance. Perhaps it was because He realised the utter impossibility of putting these fresh and powerful truths into the decadent, worn-out, enfeebled religious system of Judaism, that

He spoke the attractive little parable about the new wine and the old wine-skins (2^{22}).

In the opening section of the seventh chapter up to verse 23, we find a strong antagonism shown by Jesus to the body of tradition which had been accumulating from generation to generation. Almost every department of life was governed by some restricting rule, and all was done in the name of the Law. The particular point which called forth the denunciation of Christ on this occasion was that of ceremonial purification. Now there is no doubt these ceremonial lustrations had a purpose to serve originally, indicating to the people the necessity of purity in coming before God; but they had also a symbolical significance, for they were designed to suggest the removal of sin. It would appear that, in the time of our Lord, scrupulousness in outward observance had been raised to such a pitch that the symbolic meaning was either lost or neglected. These rites and ceremonies made no appeal to the worshipper now for purity of heart and integrity of soul. Religion, because of this, was but a whited sepulchre, fair on the outside, but full of corruption within. To get the man himself clean—not his hands or his feet or the vessel he used—was the great object of Jesus. He emphasised the thing that was symbolised in these lustrations; the Jews laid stress upon the sign. The difference was fundamental, and in their eyes of great importance. Jesus shows His great wisdom, and His great humanity, in affirming that a man is not excused from ministering to the needs of those dependent upon him, even for the sake of making an offering on the altar. This was practical religion in a form so strong that His hearers refused to accept it;

and apparently their hostility became so marked that He required to take refuge in flight, and remained in secret in the districts of Tyre and Sidon for a time.

We see, then, that although Jesus entertained no antipathy against Judaism, and respected its services and engaged in its worship, yet there were several essential points in which He differed from the customs of the period. As a reformer concerned with life and conduct He wished to cut off the excrescences that had attached themselves to worship and doctrine, and which were hindrances, rather than helps, to the worshipper. He desired to breathe a new spirit of sincerity and reality into every act. Still, His declaration that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, His attitude in regard to the Sabbath, fasting, and tradition, were such as, decidedly and emphatically, to distinguish Him from the other religious teachers of that time. He was no fierce iconoclast, neither was He a puerile conformist—He thought to breathe into the dry bones of Judaism, that they might live; to clothe empty forms with the flesh and blood of reality and truth; but He failed, just because, as He said Himself, new wine must be put into new skins.

Was there anything new and original in the doctrine of Jesus respecting God? We shall probably have to answer in the negative, but with some qualification. Van Oosterzee, we think, states the position quite accurately in the following words (*The Theology of the New Testament*, p. 73): "Jesus ascribes to God no other attributes than those already ascribed to Him in the Old Testament; but whilst there the holiness of God comes into the foreground, here love is the most prominent, the

centre of Divine perfection, on account of which he presents him for the imitation of men (Matt. 5^{48}; Luke 6^{36})." The great emphasis that the Jews at various times laid upon the holiness of God and of His unapproachableness, necessitating a system of mediation through angels, had had the effect of removing God further and further from His people. The tendency to punctilious observance of items of ritual and ceremony led to the same results. God only was holy, and the other attributes of compassion, patience, forbearance and love were practically forgotten. "The God of the Jews" of Jesus' day was practically the God of the Mohammedan of to-day; and we can easily see how much our Lord had to do in bringing back "the beauty of the Lord," by emphasising those Divine attributes which had been so unpardonably overlooked and obscured. Here, again, He was but restoring that which was lost. He was not giving anything essentially new. Nevertheless, it must have been soothing for the people to hear God spoken of and addressed as "Father." We are already aware this was no new idea in Israel's history, but it had lain so long dormant that it must have sounded strange and unfamiliar in the ears of the people. We know in the case of Jesus Himself, His assertion of His Divine Sonship provoked the bitter enmity of the Jews: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5^{18}). These Jews had apparently so entirely forgotten the teaching of some of their own religious books (see references under Son of God), that they were

prepared to slay Him for asserting the Fatherhood of God. It is quite evident that this conception of the Supreme Being was regarded by many as blasphemy; and in so far this was new theological teaching, but, as we have already ascertained, it was not original, and Jesus here was only setting forth the contents of the Divine idea as revealed in the Old Testament. In dwelling upon the love, pity, tenderness, mercy and long-suffering of God, He was, then, only restoring that which had been forgotten; but it had been so long overlooked that many people regarded this teaching with suspicion, and not a few with downright antipathy, these being no doubt influenced by the anthropomorphic conceptions in this style of teaching. Prof. H. R. Mackintosh in his little book, *The Originality of the Christian Message*, says: "Jesus did more than reproduce the past. New elements entered into His own experience of God, and we still read their reflection in the mind of those who were led by Him to the Father. It was not for such as He to possess His knowledge of God by hearsay or as a matter of quotation. That knowledge was original, and in part we can analyse its originality." The last two sentences appear to suggest that by "original" we are to understand that which is underived; whereas, in the previous chapter of the book, it seems to be an equivalent for "new." The words, "It was not for such as He to possess His knowledge of God by hearsay," really raise a very intricate question. It is commonly accepted that Jesus was dependent upon the ordinary means available at the time for obtaining knowledge. It cannot be denied that in addition to this, He

reached a clearer insight and better understanding of God through experience, meditation, communion and perfect intercourse with the Father through faith. This we might agree was new, and even unique. It is, however, with the teaching of Jesus we are dealing, and when we stated above that He did not seem to have revealed anything new or original in this teaching respecting God, it might appear that assertion was in flat contradiction of Prof. Mackintosh when he states, "Jesus did more than reproduce the past." We agree, but still think His teaching, even concerning God, was mainly a resurrection of an earlier revelation that had practically been lost. Prof. Mackintosh goes on to analyse the originality of this knowledge of God.

(1) The God and Father of Jesus Christ goes out in search of the sinful. But does not the God of the Old Testament do that? We think so, notwithstanding his note at bottom of p. 51, quoting Mr. Montefiore: "The rabbis welcomed the sinner in his repentance. But to *seek out* the sinner, and instead of avoiding the bad companion, to choose him as your friend in order to work his moral redemption, this was, I fancy, something new in the religious history of Israel." That might be so of the rabbis, but did not God seek out Adam when he transgressed? Did He not call Abraham? Did He not think of the Israelites in their distress in Egypt, and effect their deliverance? Does He not directly appeal to the sinner in Isa. 1^{18}? Surely He, of Himself, interferes again on their behalf in Isa. 40? Is there a more insistent call, or a more generous offer of mercy in the New Testament, than what is found in Isa. 55? We need not enlarge

references; we think in a general way the position in the Old Testament is not essentially different from that in the New. God is urging and entreating Israel to come to Him for salvation: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help" (Hos. 13^{9}). (2) "The Fatherhood so declared is vouched for not by verbal teaching merely; it is present in the tangible personality of Jesus." But the idea of incarnation belongs to the Old Testament. Again we refer to Isa. $7^{14ff.}$ and $9^{6ff.}$. (3) Prof. Mackintosh's third point does not require any comment. (4) His fourth point is that "National and particularistic limits are abolished once for all." Is that not contradicted by Matt. $15^{22ff.}$, particularly verse 24: "But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"? Still, I think the universal idea is found in the Old Testament (Isa. 55, 60), and particularly in the Psalms (see 65, 66, 67, 72, 100). Prof. Mackintosh is, of course, dealing with a different subject from that which here occupies our attention, and this may explain the divergence in our respective views on this point. We are not to be understood as denying there was not something quite original in the message of Jesus respecting God, but we think many of the ideas upon which He dwelt belonged to the Old Testament period of revelation, although obscured and hidden by a long time of neglect.

In St. Mark's Gospel, where the distinctive teaching of Jesus is not much in evidence, we do not expect any particular theological statement or doctrine to occupy a very prominent place. There are only two passages that may possibly require a little attention. One is 10^{18}, "Why callest thou

me good? there is none good but one, that is God." Here, the thought of Jesus is no doubt in accord with Jewish theology of the time, that God was the Alone Good. Does Jesus mean to regard Himself, then, in an inferior state of goodness? At this time it seems He does, but an explanation is offered; we must not take the statement apart from its context. This person who said "Good Master," etc., possibly had used the word "Good" merely as a complimentary form of address without any special meaning in it, and Jesus wished to lift his thoughts to higher things, and to point him to the source of all true goodness, and so He says to him, "Why do ye call me good?" (emphasis on the last word). "Don't you believe that only God is good?" It, perhaps, is hardly a question of our Lord's comparative goodness at all, but a deliberate attempt to lift the young man's mind from a commonplace to a great reality. The following note by Swete is instructive: "The Son, as Origen points out (in Js., t. xiii. 25–36), is the *εἰκὼν της ἀγαθότητος τοῦ πατρός*, and not *qua* son, *το αὐτοάγαθον*. Hence He disclaims the title *ἀγάθος*, when it is offered to Him without regard to His oneness with the Father, and refers it to the source of Godhead."

The other passage is perhaps of even greater interest, and has been the subject of much discussion from a very early date. In Mark 13^{32}, speaking of the "day of the Lord," Jesus says: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The variation in the parallel verse in St. Matthew shows that a difficulty was early felt respecting this very strong statement by Jesus.

There the words "neither the Son" are omitted, and the verse runs (24^{36}): "But of that day and hour knoweth no (man), no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"; and the suggested alternative readings in Mark are clearly made with the object of bringing the verse there into line with this from Matthew. We cannot, however, agree to that easy way of dealing with the problem. We must not forget that Mark's is the Earliest Gospel, and it is a good canon always to accept the more difficult reading. We must consequently take the words in St. Mark as they stand, and face the Christological puzzle they present as best we can. The phrasing of Mark 13^{32} shows that Jesus is speaking in a crescendo style. Men do not know of this day of the Lord, nor beings above men (angels), nor One above the angels (the Son), but only the Father knows. It is obviously open for a person to insist that manifestly all that is here said of the Son is that He is superior to the angels, but inferior to the Father; that He is not omniscient, for in respect of this most important matter in which, indeed, He was deeply concerned, our Lord says distinctly He Himself has no prescience; and, of course, it follows that, if such were the case in this instance, it may have been so in many others, and in any event the Son here admits inferiority to the Father. Well, we are bound to agree there is an aspect in which it is so, that a son as such must always be inferior to a father as such. It was so in the case of Jesus. No one supposes that as a man born into this world He was in all points equal with God. In becoming incarnate, necessarily there was a certain subordinancy accepted, and it is in this aspect of the

situation that the Son did not know the day and hour of the coming of the Lord referred to in this thirteenth chapter. There were, perhaps, many things hidden from His human consciousness; had it been otherwise, He would not have been true man. If at all times in His earthly life He had known all things with the fulness of Divine knowledge, then He could not have been a real man in the ordinary sense of that term, neither could He have been tempted in all points as we are. To be a true man required that He should be subjected to human limitations in respect of knowledge of coming events. But there was the other side of the picture, and we cannot ignore it. Often He is shown in this Gospel as different from other men, as knowing things hidden from others. This thirteenth chapter is an illustration. Indeed, the very verse which we are considering is such, for Jesus here at once professes an ignorance that is human and a knowledge that is Divine. He could easily speak about His own want of knowledge, but how did He know the extent of the ignorance or knowledge of the angels? He might have concluded, on the strength of the beliefs of current theology, that the Father knew everything, but how could He affirm so positively that the angels did not know the time of the day of the Lord? We are, of course, touching here on the verge of the *kenotic* theory, but do not feel called upon to enter into it further. We are safe in concluding that the high Christological position given to Jesus already in this Gospel is not taken away either by the statement in 1^{18} or in 13^{32}. The explanation is probably the same in both cases; the Son, *qua* Son, was not the

Supreme only Good, neither was He the fountain of all knowledge. He submitted Himself to great humiliation that He might attain to greater glory, through the salvation of men by the sacrifice of Himself.

2. So far as we can trace in the public work of Jesus, He did not differentiate between religion and morality; all conduct had its religious aspect, just as we may say all religion had its moral side also. When He entered upon His work it was with the purpose of affecting human lives in every direction, and to make them better, happier, holier men and women. We would be surprised to find any full-blown ethical system in the teaching of Jesus, yet the injunctions He has given are the basis still of the very best moral instruction that is forthcoming. In St. Mark's Gospel, as we know already, we meet little of this teaching, yet even here we find sufficient to enlighten us as to those great principles of conduct that Jesus recognised as indispensable to a good life. In $12^{29f.}$ He declares that the first commandment of all—the supreme obligation—"the chief end of man," is an enlightened, whole-hearted love of God; and the second or next great moral principle is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Only in His own life has the world seen these principles actively and fully in operation; it still waits for the realisation of this supreme moral ideal. Again, we have but to say that this was no new declaration; it was only a restatement of the revelation of the Old Testament. The student of history—even of Jewish history—knows how inadequately these principles had been interpreted in men's lives, and that the great need of the world in the day of Jesus was sincere and fervent love to God and man;

and it needs this still. Jesus had no new standard of conduct to reveal—the old was to be realised afresh; it was to become a living force instead of a dead letter.

Perhaps in regard to marriage and divorce Jesus had something new to declare to His generation. Brace in his *Gesta Christi* (p. 23) shows the appalling condition of the law and custom respecting marriage and divorce in the Roman Empire towards the close of the Republic. "The licence was frightful. Augustus attempted in vain to struggle with it by legal enactments." "Tertullian represents divorce as the very purpose and end of Roman marriage." Now, it is quite certain that Jewish society was by no means in such a dreadful condition, but it was possibly affected, to some extent, by this laxity among the Romans; and we know as an actual fact that the school of Hillel was ready to permit divorce on somewhat trivial grounds. On the other hand, the school of Shammai refused to allow it for anything less than infidelity; and probably the right would only have been given to the man. The Old Testament law regulating divorce is found in Deut. 24^{1-2}, which provides that if a man finds in his wife "some uncleanness," he may write a bill of divorcement, and send her out of his house. Probably the ערות דבר (some uncleanness) would be some sexual immodesty or immorality. So that the school of Shammai was possibly interpreting this passage correctly in the attitude it took up. The position assumed by Jesus in Mark 10^{2-12} is much more uncompromising; in fact, the words of the ninth verse do not appear to leave any room for divorce at all. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." At creation God

made them male and female that they should be help-meets one to the other; in marriage they became one flesh, and ought not to be divorced by human intervention. Jesus certainly in this passage adopts a very advanced attitude, and we are bound to be impressed by it. We know that in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew seems to modify this position: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery" (Matt. $5^{31f.}$). Yet, even with the modification contained in the words, "saving for the cause of fornication," the stability of the conjugal tie between a man and his wife affirmed here by Jesus appears to be very absolute. This was a new doctrine to that generation, and possibly it would not be regarded as unjustifiable to affirm that it was a considerable advance on anything that had been given on this subject previously. Whether the Church has always acted on it as she should is a different matter.

Jesus also, in a measure, addresses Himself to the question as to how a man may attain to the supreme height of being. The *summum bonum* He reveals is very different from that of most moral philosophers. The greatest good towards which a man should aim, for which he may well sacrifice the whole world, is spiritual; it is the salvation of his soul. The supreme end of being is, by losing life to find life . . . by sacrificing oneself for the sake of the Gospel, to save oneself for evermore (Matt. $16^{25ff.}$ or Mark $8^{35ff.}$). Here, the highest virtue appears to be self-sacrifice; but that, of course, is prompted by love

to God, love to His Son, and love to our fellow-men. Self-sacrifice is to be realised through abundant service. His own example reveals that: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (10[45]). Not by self-seeking, not through personal comfort and happiness, but by seeking constantly and faithfully the good of others, shall we realise our own highest good. This, surely, was a new and unfamiliar note, and scarcely has been appreciated to its fulness even yet. Men are still difficult to convince that the way of the Cross is the way to Glory; yet Jesus so declared.

3. Only a few sentences will be necessary as to the attitude of Jesus to Social Economics, as it is not a very obtrusive theme in St. Mark's Gospel. We might say generally, that the sympathies of our Lord were with those who were down-trodden and in distress, and He was ever ready to alleviate human sorrow; but it must not be forgotten that He ministered to the sick child of Jairus just as readily as to Bartimæus the blind beggar. He had no cut-and-dry plan for righting the social wrongs of the time; as far as we know, He accepted the existing social order as it stood. He, certainly, in our Gospel speaks against riches. In 10[25] we read the striking saying: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." And the disciples marvelled, saying, "Who then can be saved?" The rich people seemed to them very plentiful; and no doubt they did not contemplate with satisfaction a Kingdom made up of the poor only. Now, what Jesus had said in the twenty-third verse was, "How

difficult it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God," and in the twenty-fourth verse, "Children, how difficult it is to enter into the Kingdom of God." Obviously, He is not speaking directly against wealth, but pointing out the hindrance it often is to spiritual attainment. We think, then, Dearmer is wrong in pointing to Mark 10^{25} as an instance of the condemnation of riches, which he does in the article on "Socialism" in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.* After all, the keynote of the teaching of our Lord on this matter is found in Luke 12^{15}: "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." This is said to rich and poor alike. It is true, He advised the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give to the poor (10^{21}), which seems to favour an equal distribution of wealth. But, of course, it would be quite illogical to argue from the particular case to the universal. Jesus was clearly touching upon this young man's peculiar weakness. On the other hand, He does not seem to have been unduly solicitous for the poor in the case of the woman with the alabaster box of ointment —"For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always" (14^{7}). Brace in his *Gesta Christi* points out that Jesus scarcely ever alluded to any of the great social evils of His time—slavery, prostitution, war, etc. The ethics that He taught condemned all these, of course, but He was aiming after a spiritual regeneration; touching the root of human misery and distress of every kind in endeavouring to destroy evil in every form. His great ambition was to annihilate that which He regarded as the true cause of all

social and moral wrong—sin; an undertaking which demanded, and still requires, Omnipotence itself.

4. When we remember the flammability of the Jewish national life and the expectations entertained of deliverance by the Messiah, coupled with the fact that Jesus claimed to be this Messiah, we can understand that there may have been times when the impulse came to Him to take up the National Messianic rôle and play it to a finish. Yet, if such thoughts came to Him, they were repressed at once. He appears to have known right from the beginning that victory would not come by that way. So we find no political declarations from our Lord denouncing the Roman suzerainty. He acts as a loyal citizen, and maintains a respectful attitude to the lawfully constituted powers. The Pharisees and Herodians thought they would lay a trap for Him in regard to paying tribute to the Romans ($12^{13ff.}$), but without committing Himself in any way, Jesus very effectually turned the tables on themselves by His famous dictum, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." One thing stands out perfectly clear and distinct in the life of Christ—that is, He was no disturber of the public peace.

As a Reformer, then, we may conclude our Lord had no desire towards an upheaval of the established order. In religion He was true to the best in the past, giving new life to forms and ceremonies that had long been as dead, arousing men's consciences to the baneful influence of sin, and calling them to enter into a new bond with God the Father, of holiness and righteousness. He gave a new moral ideal in the "golden rule" of conduct, which is to be inspired by fervent love.

CHAPTER XII

DAYS OF CALAMITY AND SUFFERING

THE Shorter Catechism in question 23 contemplates the redemptive work of our Lord in three aspects, viz. as prophet, priest, and king. We have been engaged in considering what we may regard as the kingly office, when occupied with His Messianic claims and His doctrines respecting the Kingdom; presently we must turn our attention more particularly to His sufferings and His expiation for sin, which would correspond with His priestly character; now, for a very short time, we must be concerned with His prophetic office. And even this we cannot enter into with very great fulness. No doubt all the revelations that Jesus gave in His teaching about God—His love and mercy, His compassion and long-suffering—might appropriately enough be regarded as belonging to His prophetic work. But we shall more especially be occupied with considering it in respect of that which could not be otherwise known—the revelation of the future so far as it referred to the disciples, the Kingdom of God, Judaism and the Jews, and His own reappearance. In St. Mark's Gospel these topics are mostly gathered together, and found in a somewhat mixed condition in the thirteenth chapter. There is no need to assume

that all the declarations found therein were made at one time. St. Mark may have here blended together sayings uttered on different occasions and under different circumstances, and so he has produced a section that appears somewhat inharmonious and certainly very difficult.

1. The future of the disciples is not at all to be attractive. Our Lord had now made clear that He Himself was to suffer. He at length gives them to understand that they shall not escape. Persecution is something that they may look forward to with undoubted certainty. It shall come, too, at any rate in the first instance, from their own countrymen. Up till now the synagogue had been open to them, and they were at liberty to join in Jewish worship; the time was coming when they would be driven out of the synagogue, and when they would be hailed before rulers and kings just because they professed to believe on Him. But a promise of inspiration is given to them. When they were accused, they were not to be over-anxious as to their defence. The Holy Spirit would come upon them and teach them what they ought to say. Perhaps in this way they shall best be able to give that testimony which it was necessary the world should receive. Thus could they most successfully proclaim their faith and trust in the resurrected, living Christ. This assurance of the gift of the Spirit is practically the only ray of hope that is given to them, as the dark and foreboding prospect of the future is unveiled before their minds. Amid much that is uncertain, so far as the coming days are concerned, they at least can count upon these two things: (1) that they shall suffer grievous persecution, and

(2) that their hope of deliverance was in dependence upon the Spirit which should be given them. The future is, however, very uncertain; a great obligation rests upon them to watch, to be prepared for whatever the times might bring. Signs and portents are mentioned, indicating the progress of coming events; but even these are vague and indeterminate. Therefore, the great and solemn duty is urged again with emphatic earnestness. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (13^{37}).

2. What now were to be the prospects of the Kingdom of God—the Kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be an everlasting Kingdom? He was soon to pass away in suffering; they were to be persecuted and driven out of the synagogues; they were to be maltreated and abused. How could the Kingdom possibly come, how could the work be carried on in the future, in this period of strife into which they were about to enter? Little, indeed, is said here distinctively of the Kingdom; perhaps only two passages may be regarded as constructively having reference to it. The days of grief and sorrow, of anguish, persecution and suffering, shall be shortened for the Elect's sake (verse 20); and when catastrophies have reached their full climax, the end is at hand, and victory for His people and His Kingdom is certain; for "then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect." So the Kingdom shall be won, but not without a fight, not without the anguish, anxiety and bloodshed of war. The King shall come in glory, and the inspiring vision that they had entertained for so long shall be

realised at last. Thus does He, by a sentence or two, lift up their spirits from a picture that might have appeared more distressful than they were able to bear, and give to them a glimpse of that future glory which was to beckon them on through all the sorrow and darkness, until their dream had been transformed into a spiritual reality. The Kingdom was not lost; the future, however dark, was full of hope.

3. Undoubtedly, however, the strong section in the prophetic utterances of Jesus, as St. Mark has them arranged in this thirteenth chapter, is that which concerns Judaism and the Jews. The disciples, with their Master, were leaving the temple, and one of them, impressed with the beauty and magnificence of the building, made an appreciative remark to Jesus; it is the cue to Him, and He immediately proceeds to foretell its doom. Nothing more passes at the moment, but when they had retired to the Mount of Olives, Peter, James, and John, the three favoured disciples, with Andrew now added, ask "him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" (13^{3-4}). Jesus then proceeds to give an account of many things that must happen before this destruction of the temple shall take place. Wars at a distance, elemental commotions, social disturbances —these are only the prelude to the greater troubles to come. The real sign is found in verse 14: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains," etc. It would appear that the fulfilment of the

prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple would follow so speedily upon the appearance of the "abomination of desolation," that the people were to flee with the greatest possible haste from Jerusalem. It has been found very difficult to interpret this sign. Some think it signifies the Roman army entering Palestine. It is pointed out, on the other hand, that that was not an unknown experience. Others believe it has reference to a contemplated defilement of the Holy of Holies, such as was done by Antiochus in 168 B.C. "The patristic interpreters thought of Pilate's attempt to introduce the effigy of the emperor into the city, or of similar insults offered to the Jewish faith by Hadrian" (Swete, p. 305). Probably the idea of the appearance of a Roman army closely investing Jerusalem is the best. Salmon thinks "the traditional story is credible that, in consequence of our Lord's warnings, there took place a flight of Christians from the besieged city to Pella, when the Romans, who had planted their standards in *the Holy place*, retired for a time" (p. 472). This tradition is possibly traceable to Eusebius (*H.E.*, 3). There is no doubt the army under Titus proved itself an "abomination of desolation," and Jerusalem and the temple were in ruins before the Romans obtained complete victory in A.D. 70.

We discover in the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, and in the consequent dispersion of the Jewish people, a very evident and clear fulfilment of this prophecy by Jesus. But the ultimate result was far-reaching in its significance, for it really involved the ending of the sacrificial system that had been carried on for such a long

time. It also implied a relaxing, for the Christians, of those persecutions that had first come to them from the Jews. But, so far as St. Mark's Gospel is concerned, the extremely interesting point for us is that Jesus here foretells events which we can trace as practically having been fulfilled. This, of course, has some influence upon the views we entertain regarding Him. It does not at all follow that because He was able thus accurately to forecast the course of future events that, therefore, He was the Messiah—the Son of God. We believe, of course, other men long before His incarnation were in possession of this gift. We have only to think of the prophets and seers of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. But we are bound to give some weight to the possession of this prophetic power; and having found in other ways Jesus was the Christ of God, this ability to reveal future events lends confirmation to such other evidence. And it certainly provides us with a reason for lifting up the personality of Jesus far above that of the men of His time; for we are not aware that any of them claimed to possess this gift, or professed to be able to unravel the very tangled skein which that period of political history provided. The prophet's voice had long ceased in Israel. John the Baptist had been a meteor passing over the troubled heavens; but Jesus gave vivid portraits of the future that were to prove of great help to His followers in the trying experiences and conditions that awaited them.

4. But the great difficulty we experience in our interpretation of this chapter is to explain the references Jesus makes to His own second coming. This is to be heralded in by celestial commotions

and upheavals. The sun is to be turned into darkness, as in Joel 2^{31}—which prophecy St. Peter claimed as being fulfilled at the day of Pentecost (Acts $2^{16ff.}$); indeed, this passage in St. Mark bears a general resemblance to that referred to in Joel. Little, however, can be inferred from that. These theophanies—if we may regard the second coming of the Son of Man as such—nearly all bear the same character, and are set in the same framework. The ninety-seventh Psalm is another interesting example. Jesus undoubtedly, in Mark $13^{24ff.}$, wishes to represent this reappearance of the Son of Man as an occurrence of great significance and of much splendour. He has already connected the events with Daniel's prophecy. Now, His disciples would fully understand the phrase "Son of Man," and might in turn relate it to Dan. 7, and He may have even used some of the words of that chapter (*e.g.* verse 13). The sending of the angels to gather in the elect from the four quarters of the heavens, would correspond to the saints of the Most High obtaining possession of the Kingdom (Dan. 7^{22}). Therefore it might be possible, on the analogy of St. Peter's interpretation of Joel, to regard this prediction of Daniel, which was adopted by Jesus, as having received fulfilment more or less exactly in the visible manifestation of the Spiritual Kingdom of Messiah. This may be considered to have taken place when the Jewish Christians cut themselves off distinctly from Judaism, and founded a new community; or when, for instance, the Kingdom took visible form in the Christian Church of the latter part of the first century.

Still, it is doubtful whether this material mani-

festation of the Kingdom would have been described in such terms by Jesus, and there is a personal note in the promised return of the Son of Man that cannot be overlooked. Although He professes no knowledge of the time of its occurrence, the event is quite certain. There need be little hesitation in thinking that the early Christians expected a speedy return of their Master. In 14^{25} He says, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." These words, taken with what He states in the closing part of chapter 13, would create expectations in the minds of the disciples. Yet in this latter chapter, as we have seen, He makes it clear that the time is unknown even to Himself. We must really leave it at that. We can only accept His word that He will return; but when, we may not guess. Still, many Christians regard this passage ($13^{24ff.}$) as referring to the end of the present age, when, it is elsewhere promised, the Christ shall come with power and great glory, and He shall gather in His saints to share with Him in that glory.

Since He is to come again, and the time is uncertain, they are to be constantly watching and waiting. In particular they are to take care that they be not deceived by false Messiahs. Men shall arise and declare, "I am he," but they must not follow them; to be forewarned is to be forearmed. This evidently was a danger that Jesus apprehended greatly, for He returns to it two or three times in this chapter. There can be little doubt that the object He had before Him when speaking as He does even in this apocalyptic manner was a very practical one. It was not merely with the purpose of revealing the

future. Nay, rather, it was to impress upon them that, from henceforth, they were soldiers on guard in an enemy's country; they were therefore to be prepared for any emergency. An arduous and difficult campaign was in front of them; a cruel and implacable foe would challenge every inch of the ground. Heroic endurance (verse 13) and constant watching were indispensable. This section gives us a picture in some of its verses of the circumstances under which the early Christians laboured and struggled, and it reveals likewise the great faith, perseverance, and patience that came upon them after the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

In the end, when we have studied the revelation to the best of our ability, there is not much of the future distinctly visible. The destruction of Jerusalem—an event which circumstances of a political kind would suggest to the discerning mind—His second coming described in the apocalyptic style not infrequently adopted by some of the Jewish prophets and poets, really sum up His references to future events. The one thing that the disciples would gather from the impressive sentences was that stripes, bonds and afflictions (Acts 20^{23}) awaited them.

The theme, however, that seemed to possess a powerful fascination for Jesus, we might indeed say a morbid attractiveness, is that of suffering—for Himself first of all, for that is approaching very near; but for His followers also, although this is somewhat in the distance. Towards the close of His earthly ministry He is evidently very desirous of filling their minds with this idea—quite possibly with the intention of preparing them for what is

coming. Only three of them had seen the fulness of the glorious vision of the heights, but now all are to go down into the valley, and their faith is to be tried in a way that they have never experienced before. Many events seem to have been crowded into the last week at Jerusalem, and some of them appear to us rather contradictory. One day the high-water mark of the popularity of Jesus is reached as He receives the public welcome into the Holy City; the next, His spiritual power is recognised as He cleanses the temple; and two or three days after that He is seen passing along the streets bearing His cross. "The hour has come," and, humanly speaking, it has been brought about by one of His followers. Somehow, Jesus appears to have realised that He was to suffer at the Passover, yet He knows also that He will eat of this feast. The earlier part of chapter 14 leaves us with the impression that He has, beforehand, made special preparations. This was certainly not an unusual thing to do. When we remember the multitudes that crowded into Jerusalem from the provinces and other scattered Jewish communities, we can understand the necessity for making arrangements in anticipation of the event. But it would seem from verse 12 that their Master had even forestalled His disciples on this occasion. The suggestion in verses 13–14 of meeting the man bearing the pitcher is, that this was more than a mere coincidence; but we need hardly press that point. Knowing something of the customs of the East, we can understand that a man bearing a pitcher of water would certainly be an unusual sight in Jerusalem at any time, but especially during the observance of the

Passover. Swete suggests that this man "was probably a servant; he had been sent to fetch a supply of water, probably from Siloam, and for use at the feast." Menzies, on the other hand, remarks: "As water is generally fetched by women in the East, a man with a water-jar would act as a good signal." We think this all points to a pre-arrangement on the part of our Lord, and the man, whether servant or not, was specially made to act as a guide. The disciples were to follow him, and enter into the house after him, where they would be shown a large upper room prepared for the occasion.

We do not raise the question here whether this was the Passover feast they observed, or whether it was a new institution more or less in imitation of that feast; neither do we feel called upon to discuss whether, if it was the Passover, they had anticipated the regular time of observance by one day, which is suggested by the statement in John 18^{28}. We feel these points are all outside the scope of our main subject; and further, even if we had anything to contribute to the solution of the difficulty (which we have not), it would in no way affect the Christology of the Earliest Gospel. Certainly, if it could be established that Jesus anticipated the regular observance of the Passover feast by some twenty-four hours, it would give us ground for saying that at this juncture He claimed to have the right to alter at will the long-observed customs and laws of the older economy. We are not greatly anxious to follow up that point, because it apparently involves a conflict between the Synoptics and the fourth Gospel; and who shall

reconcile them now? We shall presently discover that Jesus claims something more than to alter the observance of a Jewish feast by one day.

We take it, then, that this was the Passover that Jesus and His disciples were engaged in eating, and it was an acknowledgment on His part of the binding character of that institution. Up to the very last, we may affirm, Jesus shows Himself a loyal Jew. The details of this observance, so far as St. Mark's Gospel is concerned, are very meagre indeed. Our author appears to be hurrying on to the more impressive and amazing fact of the crucifixion. Matthew and Luke furnish more particulars; we need only quote 22^{15} of the latter Gospel as illustrating the thoughts in the mind of Christ at this time: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." There can be no doubt He recognises that the end of His earthly life has almost come, and in the upper room He is taking farewell of His disciples. Events had occurred quickly, but not so rapidly that He has not foreseen them all, and understood the signs of the times. During the course of the Supper Jesus made it plain to them that His hour had come—that finish to His work which He had so frequently announced to them already. With calm dignity and unfailing resolution He intimates the impending suffering. But saddest thought of all, the end is to be brought about through the treachery of one of their own number. Small wonder, "they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I?" In this Gospel He does not enlighten them, and only veiledly so in the others. We are not told either of Judas going out

into the darkness to carry out his deed of treachery; we are informed in verse 21 of the solemn warning, and we might say even appeal, that Jesus makes, yet without success. Only John tells of the giving of the ψωμίον—the chosen fragment—by Jesus to Judas, and in this act making a silent yet most eloquent appeal to his better nature. It was all in vain—"he then having received the sop went immediately out."

With his departure the atmosphere seems to have cleared for a little; the eleven do not quite realise the course of present events. Now, our Lord, in a simple, solemn institution which is to be a memorial of His death for all time, gathers up all the recent teaching concerning Himself, and through this new rite illustrates the suffering He is about to endure. Then, by a prayer of thanksgiving, He closes the old economy and opens a new, which is to be perpetuated throughout the ages. Nothing could be so sublimely simple as the record of the institution of the Lord's Supper found in verses 22–25. The bread broken is His body, which shall be broken on the morrow; the wine poured out His blood, that shall be shed. Deliberately, we think, Jesus connects this institution with the Passover; and early His followers must have understood that it involved the passing away of the old feast, and the introduction of an observance that was new. The Pauline Epistles show it was soon recognised that He was Himself the paschal lamb—"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5^7); He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13^8). Never, I think, could the disciples forget this scene in the upper room; as

yet they did not quite grasp all its significance, but the simple act would be stamped upon their memories for ever. And it is certainly not without its pathetic import. Jesus wished His memory to be treasured up for all time coming. He was about to die, yet He desired, at the moment, to find immortality in the affectionate remembrance of these, His friends and companions during these past years of activity and labour. He wishes His work to live on, and prosper even more abundantly, in the future. But above all else, He desired His teaching and revelation to be preserved and continued. He and His companions were about to bid farewell to the old familiar religious experiences, yet they were to remember all that was good in them, and in particular, they were to find in Him the fulfilment of the old and the foundation of the new. And He took "the cup . . . and he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many" (14^{24}). Could Jesus have instituted this supper, or spoken such words, unless He was conscious that He was the Messiah? Why, in this last phrase He appropriates the very words of Isa. 53^{12}, "and he bare the sin of many"! Are we putting it too strongly when we say that it would have been blasphemy for Him to have acted and spoken as He did on this occasion, if He was not satisfied that He was verily the Son of God? The solemn service concluded with a song of praise, part of the Hallel; no doubt closing with Psalm 118. How significant to Jesus now would be the words, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Part of the very language with

which they had greeted Him as He entered Jerusalem a few days before! And, having chanted these phrases, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever," Jesus passed out into the darkness, to engage in His last fight in Gethsemane.

There is a compound word met with a few times in the Old Testament, and particularly in the twenty-third Psalm, which has been of interest to scholars. צַלְמָוֶת has been translated "(the valley of) the shadow of death," and is usually interpreted as death itself. It is not that. Perhaps (the valley of) *deathlike gloom* brings out the idea more distinctly. The thought underlying the word is a deep gorge, into which the sun's rays do not penetrate, and there are found both the coldness and shadow commonly associated with death. When Jesus went out of the upper room and crossed the brook Cedron, He entered into the valley of the shadow—into the deathly gloom. Gethsemane is a word that is pregnant with imperfectly defined significance to most Christians; possibly it suggests far more than can be understood or expressed. There is a mystery in the agony in the Garden that we cannot explain. The trend of the narrative leads us to assume that Jesus, most deliberately, went forward to this contest as if He clearly knew that it must take place. When He had entered into the Garden, He enjoined the disciples to remain where they were, while He went away to pray. But He takes Peter, James, and John with Him, and sets them on guard. Clearly, the burden of His prayer is that the cup, which He was about to drink, might pass from Him. Now, we must not disguise from ourselves the

extraordinary situation which is here revealed. Jesus, for some considerable time, had been teaching the disciples not only that He was the Messiah, but that in the fulfilling of that office He must become the Suffering Servant of Jehovah; and that in Him those prophecies, such as Isa. 53, were to find fulfilment. He certainly had insisted that for both Him and them the path of suffering was the way to glory. He had been looking forward to this "cup" for a more or less lengthened period; yet now, as it is about to be put into His hand, He shrinks from it in fearfulness, and desires to put it from Him. One is bound to think at this point of Socrates and his cup of hemlock, and to contrast his calm courage with the horror and anguish that now appear to overwhelm Jesus. Up till now, and after the Confession at Cæsarea Philippi, our Lord had talked quite freely of the sufferings that awaited Him, and of the decease He should accomplish at Jerusalem; the thought was familiar to His mind. Yet it may be that now, as He came into more immediate contact with the reality, the tragedy of the morrow appalled Him, and that for the moment He was, as it were, swept off His feet by the dreadful humiliation to which He was about to be subjected. Nevertheless, we must know He was no coward. As a man, there was no reason why death in an extremely cruel form should not have appeared utterly repugnant and loathsome to Him. He had feelings such as other men possess; and it is possible that if Socrates had been in Jesus' place he would not have played the part with greater heroism. That there was no cowardice in His shrinking now, will be understood when we remember that under

cover of darkness He might have escaped and hidden Himself. But He is a willing victim; He looks upon the experiences the coming hours were to bring Him with the deepest horror, and yet He will not flee from them. The battle for the souls of men is really fought out in the darkness of Gethsemane. Here Jesus is both priest and sacrifice.

Still, people will contrast this shrinking on the part of our Saviour in the hour of His extreme ordeal with the bold bearing and courageous behaviour of "the noble army of martyrs." Somewhat recent experiences have, perhaps, so enlightened us as to enable us to form a better estimate of the attitude of Christ on this occasion. The late war furnished many instances of men of a highly developed sensitive nature and of keen and vivid imagination, who shrank with the greatest horror from the carnage of blood, and yet who, knowing the needs of the situation, bravely went forward to do and die for their country. Was their courage not as great, was it not possibly of a higher type, than that of those of a duller imagination and of a more sluggish sensitive system? The very constitution of the one class added untold agonies undreamt of by the other. Surely it was so with Jesus. He probably could discern, and be affected by, forces and elements in the situation which now confronted Him, that would not have been perceived by another. The words suggest that His physical suffering was more or less momentary and a surprise; the mental anguish was more bitter than death itself.

It is likely quite true that some Christian people have been much exercised in their minds over the "agony in the Garden," and there are those who

appear to think an apology for it is necessary. Perhaps it would have been more spectacular if Jesus had gone forth from the upper room to the Sanhedrin, where Judas and some of the Council were hatching their plot, and openly challenged them to do their worst. Possibly some men would have been more impressed if there had been no Gethsemane, and if Jesus had remained calm and unperturbed throughout the hours that lay between the eating of the Supper and His Crucifixion. We may be quite sure if this story had been a work of fiction rather than real history, something like that would have been the line along which it would have run, and it would have been just as unnatural and untrue to real life, as fiction often is. Perhaps it is difficult to behold Jesus as a hero while He wrestles in the darkness of the Garden; but had there been no Gethsemane, no agony there, other objectors would soon have exclaimed, "How unnatural! How improbable! Was this a man at all that He could suffer thus unmoved?" If this had been how He went forward to His death, would His very sufferings have become the bond of union and sympathy between Him and His people which we find to be the case? It seems very unlikely, for human nature has little in common with a sphinx; and the heroes and heroines whom we meet with in daily life are those who, while occasionally they may be on the mount of transfiguration, have oftener possibly to descend and pass through the valley of the deathlike gloom. Moreover, it may be, as many good people have often thought, that there were elements in this agony in the Garden that human eye could not see, nor human mind understand. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful

unto death." Is there not more than a suggestion of spiritual struggle here? It is possible that the main cause of the shrinking of Jesus now is not the physical pain which is in prospect, but the sin that demands such suffering — physical, moral and spiritual—as an expiation. He is giving Himself a ransom for many (10[45]), and as the Lamb bore the sins of its victim, so Jesus is now about to bear the transgressions of His people, and the weight of that burden was almost more than He could bear, so that His righteous soul shrank from it in horror. We shall probably never be able to explain, nor understand, all the antecedents and consequents of this most pathetic period in the earthly life of our Lord. It may be very well regarded as a crisis in His work of atonement. It is surprising that so many details are now given, when we remember that Peter, James and John were sleeping while He prayed, and that afterwards He does not seem to have had any opportunity of explaining the situation to them.

Yet we must not forget that one sublime ray of light penetrates into the darkness of Gethsemane, and gilds the mystery which its shadows hold as with a golden glory—this is our Lord's perfect submission to the will of God. However ardently He desired the cup to pass, however earnestly He prayed in the hour of His soul's travail, there is the spirit of calm resignation through it all—"Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." No more heroic, more courageous attitude could be shown than this, and certainly it must be affirmed that after the struggle is ended in the Garden, the shrinking and horror appear all to have passed away from the mind of Christ, so that when His captors

approach, He faces them without any hesitation or fear.

The period of agony in Gethsemane is one of the most solemn and awe-inspiring experiences recorded of Him. It is certainly difficult to reconcile His appearance there with those lofty presentations which we find, for instance, in such incidents as the Transfiguration or Baptism, or with the possession of those powers to which His miraculous works bear testimony. Perhaps we shall agree, that in the Garden, for a time, His Divinity was in eclipse, and His majesty was veiled for deep and mysterious reasons, known to God alone. This suffering was, many believe, an essential part of the atoning work of Christ. And finally, we are satisfied that although He goes forth from the Garden a captive in the hands of cruel men, yet He is still the Son of God, and the Son of Man; true to the highest revelation that He enjoys, and faithful even unto death. His love inspires Him to the supremest sacrifice.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

THE importance which St. Mark attached to the death of Jesus is seen from the amount of space he devotes to it in his Gospel. He has nothing to say concerning His birth, but about one-sixth of his whole book is connected with His death. Indeed, the prominence is more pronounced than that comparison suggests, for practically the theme of suffering and death pervades the Gospel from the eighth chapter onward. Chapters 1–10 are occupied with a narrative of the *three years'* public ministry, while no less than six chapters (11–16) are devoted to the last *week* in Jerusalem. It might be considered a very unequal division of the book, yet it is instructive to remember the very marked prominence that is thus given to what we may designate the more distinctively expiatory work of Jesus.

After the betrayal of his Master by Judas, the former is swiftly taken before the High Priest. The description in $14^{53ff.}$ leads us to suppose this was a full meeting of the Sanhedrin. Whether it had been sitting during the whole night waiting for the arrival of Jesus, does not appear. If this was so, judging from the article "Sanhedrin" in Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopædia* (vol. iii. p. 765) it was very

unusual; the common time for sitting being every day except the Sabbath and festivals, "from the termination of the daily morning sacrifice till the daily evening sacrifice." However it was, Jesus was brought before the Council as speedily as possible, and during the night, which is clearly an inference from 15^{1}. St. Mark's account leaves the impression that several charges of a general character were at first made against Him, but these could not be substantiated for want of legal evidence. We must assume that while the court was undoubtedly biased against their prisoner, they would maintain an appearance of strict conformity to the canons of justice. Besides, there were in the Council a few sympathisers with Jesus, and these, no doubt, according to their power, would insist that He should receive fair play in His trial. When these charges failed, an attempt was made to prove that He had spoken blasphemy against the temple (14^{58}); probably the witnesses were sincere enough in the evidence they gave on this point, and we know literally it was true. But we have seen it was all a misapprehension, which could easily have been explained. Again, the Evangelist refers to the confusion among the witnesses. If he was writing to Romans, this point would be well understood, and we are not surprised that he thus emphasises it by repetition. Even if these witnesses had agreed in their testimony, it does not seem to have been strong enough to secure the condemnation of the prisoner, and we may be sure those who were in the plot, and had negotiated the terms with Judas, began to be anxious. In this emergency the High Priest intervenes. Who the High Priest was

St. Mark does not mention, and we are, therefore, saved any discussion as to whether it was Annas or Caiaphas. Probably he interferes in order to secure some statement from Jesus that shall help towards His own condemnation; yet such an attempt to obtain incriminating evidence was strictly against the usual procedure of the Sanhedrin. If this was his purpose, at first he fails—Jesus answers nothing.

Here is a silence on the part of our Lord that we may well try to interpret. The Evangelists dwell particularly on it; and we must, therefore, for a moment consider His attitude before the Council. It is always the privilege of a prisoner to refuse to answer any questions which may contribute to his own condemnation. Is that the meaning of the silence of Christ on this occasion? We think the answer is bound to be in the negative; certainly He was under no obligation to help forward the Jewish plot. Perhaps He realised, as the witnesses were giving their evidence, that the best thing He could do to allow its weakness to be manifest even to the Council, was to remain silent. It is clear, too, from verse 63, "What need we any further witnesses?" that this weakness was so transparent that they could not hide it from themselves. Possibly, however, there may have been other considerations that led Jesus to make no answer to the charges now urged against Him. They were directed mostly towards His teaching and life. These could really answer for themselves. He believed they were above reproach, and did not require any defence. It was difficult for falsehood to refute the truth; and His life was true, well known, open before the world. It is a different matter, however, when the High

Priest puts to Him the challenging question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" An answer must be given now. Silence would be misunderstood, might even be culpable—cowardly. "And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." "Blasphemy, blasphemy," shout many in the Council. "And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." There can be no longer any doubt as to the import of the words "Son of Man"; no question as to the extent of the claim that Jesus here makes. Beautifully dignified, both in silence and in speech, He bears Himself throughout all these proceedings before the Sanhedrin. He does not fight for His life, neither does He recklessly throw it away. He is not numbed by terror now, as He appeared to have been a few hours ago. Anticipation of the fight is often worse than its reality.

According to the article referred to above, the whole proceedings before the Sanhedrin were informal and illegal. "No criminal trial could be carried through in the night" (Mishna Sanhedrin, iv. 1). Besides, no capital sentence of guilt could be pronounced on the same day as the trial; it required to be reserved until the following day, and so a trial on the capital charge could not be held on the day of preparation. All these points seem to have been violated in the case of Jesus. There appears to have been introduced into the proceedings on this occasion an unseemly and unusual haste. St. Matthew, perhaps, explains this feverish desire for the immediate condemnation of our Lord. "And they consulted that they might take Jesus by

subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matt. 26^{4-5}). Evidently the popularity of Jesus was still something that they feared. For the moment it was in eclipse, and they must use all their craft and the utmost expedition to put Him to death before the multitude came to its senses again. It is a tribute to the power of Christ, even at the very last, that the Jewish rulers thus feared Him. He, the Man from Nazareth, had commenced His fight alone, with few advantages; they had opposed Him and dogged His every footstep. Now He is their prisoner, yet they cannot rest until they have Him nailed to the tree, so conscious are they of the real power of the personality of Jesus of Nazareth.

While this travesty of justice is being enacted in the Sanhedrin, an incident is taking place within the precincts of the High Priest's palace that cuts deeper into the soul of Jesus than anything said or done before the Council. The wound that one sometimes receives from one's friends is often too deep to bleed, but is more grievous than death itself. It was exceedingly trying for the Lord calmly to contemplate the treachery of Judas; crueller still when in the hour of His need "they all forsook him and fled"; but "the most unkindest cut" of all was when Peter, one of His favourite disciples, denied Him. We know He had warned this disciple; that circumstance, perhaps, only added sharpness to the thrust. If Peter had been surprised, there might have been some excuse for him. But the mercy of the Messiah is greater than the sin of Peter. The crowing of the cock brought back to him the warning words of his Lord, "And when he thought thereon,

he wept" bitter tears of repentance. And we can only imagine the grief of his soul, as clouds and darkness gathered thick around his spirit, in the day of the Cross.

However eager the opponents of Jesus might be to have Him speedily put to death, some delay was inevitable. The Sanhedrin could try a person on the capital charge, but had not power to carry out its own sentence of death. They had found Jesus of Nazareth guilty of blasphemy, and in their opinion He was worthy of condemnation, but they had to satisfy the Roman Governor, Pilate, on this latter point; and it is transparently evident that they were not very certain of their power to obtain the death sentence on the evidence they were able to furnish. It is quite clear that they now change their tactics, and proceed to give a political colour to the movement and work of Jesus. St. Mark's account in the earlier part of chapter 15 is not so complete as we would desire, but we can easily gather the drift of his meaning. When we are informed in verse 2 that Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" we must presume that this is the charge that His accusers wish to press against Him. But their success in this direction is not very great; possibly Pilate knew something of the work of Jesus already. In any case, the Governor soon ascertains the spiritual character of the Kingdom Jesus claims (John 18^{36}), and satisfies himself that the Roman power has nothing to fear from the prisoner now at the bar. Mark makes it clear in 15^{10} that Pilate has correctly gauged the situation. The account in this chapter regarding Barabbas does not bring out the position of affairs very

distinctly. We prefer St. Matthew's narrative ($27^{15ff.}$), who, writing for Jews, would be careful to describe the situation with much accuracy in details. It is Pilate (who thus hopes to secure the discharge of Jesus) who makes appeal to them to choose Him as the prisoner commonly released at the feast of the Passover. But this attempt is quite unsuccessful. The other Evangelists all give fuller particulars of the efforts the Governor made to save Jesus; possibly St. Mark, writing for Romans, had no desire to dwell upon this aspect. He does not punctuate the declarations of the Governor of the innocency of the prisoner. In this account, Pilate only once calls out to the mob, "What evil hath he done?" Nor does St. Mark paint him as so utterly weak and impotent as he appears in the other records; there is very little in this narrative inconsistent with the dignity of a Roman Governor, so far as Pilate's conduct is concerned. The attitude of Jesus before him is generally the same as that which He adopted before the Sanhedrin. He remains silent, when He knows words are of no avail. He speaks without hesitation when His claims and office are in question. It would be true to say that His bearing before Pilate appears to have impressed the latter, and this possibly explains to some extent why he strives so earnestly to save Jesus. The crowd, however, is out for blood; it is packed with the minions of the priests and scribes, who prompt them to call for Barabbas: "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." Nothing can rescue the reputation of the Roman Governor from the obloquy

consequent upon this prostitution of his high office to the perpetration of an ignoble act. For him there was but one duty—to save a prisoner whom he knew to be innocent. It was to secure that possibility that the power of life and death had been taken from the Sanhedrin. He failed in the greatest hour of his life; but it is fair to say he probably did not know, neither did he understand. Jesus remained calm and dignified throughout all this trying time, when, in literal fulfilment of prophecy—His own and others—He was being handed over to the Gentiles. No craving for His life, no urging of His innocence, no beseeching that the Roman power may be used for His protection, are ever made. He alone passes through all these proceedings without a stain on His honour; and yet He was the prisoner found worthy of death.

Not an hour of respite is given to Him. As soon as Pilate gave permission, He is taken away to be crucified. We need not dwell upon the indignities to which He is subjected. We are only amazed that the Son of God could bear so patiently the buffoonery of the soldiers and the mob. Yet, perhaps, they may be pardoned. What was He but an ordinary prisoner to them? His own ecclesiastical leaders had secured His condemnation. When the mob had satisfied their craving for the ridiculous, soon His cross is laid upon Him, and He proceeds upon His *via dolorosa*. Two incidents occur on this journey; or, to be exact, one of them happens shortly after it is begun, the other just at its close. As a carpenter in the village of Nazareth, Jesus would be quite accustomed to handle and carry rough planks of wood, and although three years

have passed since He was engaged in that work, yet we would expect some traces of His previous training and experience still to remain. It is not so. It was customary for the person condemned to crucifixion to carry his own cross to the place of execution. And so the rough slabs of wood are laid upon the shoulders of Jesus; but soon they prove too heavy for Him, and He sinks down under their weight, and Simon, a Cyrenian, is compelled to carry the cross instead. Now, how shall we account for this extreme physical weakness on the part of our Lord? Is it due in any way to that extreme anguish we found Him enduring in the Garden? However He suffered there, up to this point He has borne Himself with great courage in public, and some may be disappointed that He breaks down now. Has the near approach of death taken all the fortitude from Him? We refuse to believe that is the proper explanation, and we shall now indicate a reason for saying so. Does this incident not rather suggest that physically Jesus was not very robust? We find on one occasion He is wearied with His journey (John 4^{6}), and He rests Himself while His disciples, physically stronger men apparently, go into the village to secure food. Yet He and His companions all seem to have been young men, about the same age, and we would have expected Him to be as vigorous as any of the others. We know also that it was a matter of astonishment that Jesus expired upon the cross so quickly; even Pilate can hardly believe He is dead, when Joseph seeks His body (Mark 15^{44}). Writers tell us that sometimes the victims of the cross lingered on for several days in agony, until the body, wasted through

want of food, became utterly exhausted. Jesus expired in a few hours. Nature could struggle no longer; but she may have been handicapped right from the beginning by a comparatively weak physical constitution. This, too, if it were so, would help to explain, if explanation were necessary, the great sympathy Jesus ever showed towards those who were in bodily infirmity and distress. Does human life show anything more common than constitutional weakness and suffering? We must remember Jesus was tried in all points as we are.

The other incident happened apparently when the procession had arrived at Golgotha, and when they were about to fasten Him to the cross. It was customary to provide a cordial of "wine mingled with myrrh" (Mark 15^{23}) for criminals who were about to suffer crucifixion—a band of charitably disposed women in Jerusalem took this kind office on themselves. In the corresponding passage in Matthew he states: "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall" (27^{34}). As myrrh is bitter, we presume that it represents the "gall" of the latter passage, and are justified in concluding St. Mark's statement, resting on the word of St. Peter, who, we think, would be a close observer of all that took place, is to be relied upon. The question is, What effect was intended to be produced by the drink? No doubt it was designed in some way to relieve the sufferings of the victim. Mr. Cromarty Smith in the article "Myrrh" (Hastings' *D.C. and G.*) says it was intended as an anodyne. This view is evidently shared by Prof. David Smith, who, in an article on the "Crucifixion" (Hastings' *D.C. and G.*), says this draught was given "in order to deaden

their sensibility." Now the singular thing is, that the action of myrrh seems to be stimulating and not enervating. It is open for us to believe, and from the action of myrrh especially so, that the cordial was given to act as a sort of stimulant, so that the victim might be strengthened at the beginning of the ordeal, when the experience of pain would be keenest. Presently bodily weakness and anguish would themselves act as an anodyne; for human nature will only bear these up to a point, after which there is the relief of unconsciousness. But whatever was the purpose of the draught, Jesus refuses to partake of it. He is strong enough in heart to face the great ordeal without any artificial help, whether stimulant or depressant. Prof. David Smith in the article referred to above asks: "What was the reason for rejecting it? It was not that the endurance of physical pain was necessary to the efficacy of His sacrificial death; nor was it merely that He had a sentimental repugnance to the idea of dying in a state of stupefaction. It was rather that He was bent on doing to the last the work which had been given Him to do." This work, in the case in point, being suffering unto death, it is questionable whether the latter part of Prof. Smith's statement does not contradict the earlier. However that may be, it was designed that Jesus should "by the grace of God taste death for every man" (Heb. 2^{9}), and He was to be made "perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2^{10}). Our Lord no doubt realised this, and seeing the Father had not removed the cup from Him, He would drink it to the bitterest dregs, and not avoid one drop by any device. We discover here, again, the great

moral and spiritual power of Jesus. If, perhaps, we concede He was weak in body, we are satisfied He was strong in soul, and steadfastly determined in His obedience to the will of God.

For six hours, from the third to the ninth hour, or from nine o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon, the tragedy is carried on upon the hill of Calvary. We need not enter into those details that the Evangelist supplies; suffice it to say that Jesus was submitted to mocking and ridicule, but He had never a word to say in reply. A pall of darkness, St. Mark tells us, descended upon the earth at the sixth hour and remained until the ninth. What thoughts came into the minds of those standing round the cross we can hardly imagine; we know how awful and unnerving such an experience was likely to be, and we can well believe there would be much searching of heart. At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani"—the opening words of Psalm 22. A despairing cry some may say, yet Menzies in his beautiful note on chap. $15^{33ff.}$ suggests that Jesus may have been thinking of some of the magnificent and inspiring sentences of this psalm: "he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted"; "they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall ever live"; "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." We have, however, already remarked on the triumphant close of this psalm. This cry which rang out through the darkness, in one way may be regarded as the most desolating, heart-stricken call of agony the world has ever heard—

there may lie beneath it depths which the human mind can never fathom; but in another view of it, it was a shout of victory, marking the height of Divine love and compassion, and bringing to a sinful world assurance of an adequate atonement. It is but the one utterance that Jesus makes on the cross according to both Mark and Matthew, and as we believe Peter had mingled with the crowd which surrounded the scene of the crucifixion, we may be sure never to his dying day would he forget these words. Another loud cry of physical suffering, or holy horror because He is bearing the sin of the world, breaks forth from Jesus, and then all is still. Presently the darkness begins to dissolve, and when men gaze upon the centre of the three crosses the peace and majesty of death are there.

> "Mourn, mourn, ye afflicted children,
> Mourn in solemn strains;
> Your sanguine hopes of liberty give o'er,
> Your hero, friend and father is no more."

CHAPTER XIV

WANING AND WAXING FAITH

ONE of the very extraordinary things about the narrative relating to the crucifixion of Jesus, is that the disciples practically disappear from the story from the apprehension of Jesus in the Garden until He is raised from the dead. That two of them—Peter and John—lingered on in the background we do not overlook; indeed, we believe they were companions and close observers throughout the trial and execution of Jesus, but they did not in any way make their presence obtrusive; possibly they were just as much afraid as the others, and so it would be quite true of them also—"they all forsook him and fled" (Mark 14^{50}). We would desire very greatly to ascertain what was passing in their minds now respecting Christ and His Kingdom; but we are left to inference and conjecture, and, as far as the Earliest Gospel is concerned, the ground we have to go upon is not very extensive. The fact that they, at this time, so completely disappear from the story is itself significant. We may conclude that for the moment what Jesus had already feared, and what He had by His teaching and works endeavoured to provide against, had actually happened: their faith had not been able

to withstand the shock of His death. There can be little doubt that now they looked upon their cause as lost; calamity had fallen upon the Kingdom for which they had hoped and laboured. In the tragedy of Calvary they recognised irretrievable ruin to all their schemes, and the hopes they had cherished had perished in the blackness of those hours of mysterious darkness which they would never forget. The reality of all these experiences with which we have been dealing is faithfully reflected in the attitude of the disciples. They had clung to Jesus so much during the past years; they had been entirely dependent upon Him; and now He was gone—their stay and support, the very foundation upon which everything depended, was swept away, and there appeared nothing upon which they could lay firm hold. Even though we assume they had, more or less, imbibed the recent Messianic teaching of their Master, yet now that He had been put to death they did not see how the Kingdom which He had promised could be realised. It is very significant that some of them about this time appear to have returned to their old occupations. "Simon Peter saith . . . I go a fishing" (John 21[3]). It is true this action appears to have taken place after some assurance had been given them of the resurrection of Jesus, but it is the only passage we can recall that throws some light upon the actual condition of the disciples after the crucifixion. They were ready to go back to their old employment. We may therefore assume they no longer hoped for a Kingdom, or expected anything further to come out of the movement in which they had been recently engaged. Of course some interpret the

words "I go a fishing" as an intention merely to take up temporary work to provide for their immediate necessities. But the same means were available now that had supplied them in the past. In any case, it does not seem unfair to suggest that this action on the part of Peter and others indicated that they had abandoned all thoughts, in the meantime, of carrying on the particular work of Jesus. His resurrection was so recent, His appearance so fleeting, and His disappearance so mysterious, that it is likely they were not yet quite satisfied in their minds regarding Him.

Perhaps we shall never be able to discover what the followers of our Lord actually thought of Him during the days He lay in the grave. That they were filled with doubts and misgivings we may be perfectly certain; that any of them thought Him an impostor is utterly improbable. They may have forgotten at this juncture the doctrines He had taught; the influence of the life He had lived would not so easily pass away. And we therefore think it quite incredible that any of those who had companied with Him during His public ministry could look upon Him as a deceiver. We can suppose it possible, although it was perhaps not very probable, that some of them might come to the conclusion that He was self-deceived, that He really had fancied Himself the Messiah, but in this He was somehow mistaken, as His death revealed. And further than that we can hardly conceive their doubts to have gone. We judge from Luke 24^{21} that their great disappointment was that the Messianic Kingdom had not been established before His departure. Perhaps the minds of the disciples

were just overborne with a wave of incredulity—the effect of His death. That is to say, they still believed in Him, but their mental powers had, for the time, been utterly shattered, so that they could not recall His teaching, and in the circumstances it seemed useless for them to do so. It appeared hard for them to argue a theory against the fact of death.

But all this shows us that those were critical days for the Kingdom. Humanly speaking, everything depended, at this juncture, on the faith of the disciples, and apparently it had failed. If they had permanently abandoned their mission and gone back to their former employment, then it hardly seems possible that the spiritual work could have been carried on. Only a few had been trained for this labour; a smaller number still had witnessed some of the glorious mysteries that had been withheld from the rest. If these had utterly failed, who was left to take up the work for which Jesus had lived and died? We can see here a reason why He had been so assiduous in instructing them as to the suffering that awaited Him, and yet that He should rise triumphant over death and the grave. He knew how severely their faith would be tried in these dark days of sorrow and bereavement, and but that these days were brief, the faith of the elect and chosen ones might not have withstood disaster. This was the time of which Jesus had spoken long ago ($11^{18ff.}$), when He, as the bridegroom, should be taken from them, and they should fast. We can imagine that the disciples remained pretty much in secret at this period, because they realised that possibly the life of some of them was in peril. It is

not improbable that they lived in somewhat close seclusion during the festivities of the Passover season, mourning for their absent Lord. In the bitterness of their grief their souls abhorred food, and their hearts were weighed down with a sorrow greater than some of them could bear. What was Peter, for instance, thinking during these sad, sad days? He could only remember, perhaps, the look of his Master; and it is significant that he at this time remained closely associated with the other disciples. So far as they were concerned, these were drab days for them all; but again, as often happens in other circumstances, the blackness is relieved by a beam of light that breaks into the gloom. The ministry of the women receives at this stage distinct prominence. There is no indication that their faith is stronger, or that their apprehension is keener, than that of the men, but their love will not be quenched even by death itself. It is clearly a dead Christ whom they seek when they go to the sepulchre, otherwise they would not have obtained the spices; but love prompts them to this kind act. Possibly it was more customary for such offices to be discharged by women than by men, and they were evidently unaware of the spices wherewith Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus had embalmed the body of their Lord. The loyal attachment of these women who had followed Him from Galilee right up to the very last hour, is something that we can dwell upon with satisfaction. The whole company of the followers of Jesus for some days had now been walking in the Valley of the Shadow, and had "heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro"; but the shadows were about to lift and the gloom

to disappear for ever. Indescribably severe had been their trial; in the end they had not utterly failed. These days passed all too slowly, and then the sun rose on the resurrection morn.

Not so very long ago we had the rather infrequent opportunity of observing what was almost a total eclipse of the sun. It was exceedingly interesting in the early summer morning to watch the centre of our system attaining to his wonted splendour, then a dense shadow passed over his face, for a short time obscuring his glory, diminishing his light, and to an extent shutting off his heat. Soon the shadow moved away, and the brightness of the sun asserted itself again—the weird and somewhat unfamiliar experience had passed. It seems an appropriate illustration of the life of Jesus—He had attained to maximum splendour on the Mount of Transfiguration. Then the dense shadow of suffering and death hid His glory from men's sight for a time; but the interposition of the shadow was only brief. Presently it passed away, and the exceeding brightness of Jesus in His resurrection glory was to be seen with undiminished, nay, with increased grandeur and impressiveness. And the eyes of countless thousands have through the ages since turned with hopefulness to the rising of this Sun, which, according to promise, shall never set.

Every student in approaching a consideration of the very important subject of the resurrection of Jesus must be conscious of its extreme difficulty. There is, of course, the easy method, that was resorted to by many in the past generations, of saying, "It is recorded in the Bible, and we must accept it." That has a good deal to commend it,

because it has this for its underlying presumption—that the men who wrote the Bible, and particularly (as we are dealing with a book in the New Testament), that the men who contributed to this volume, were as anxious, at least, to reveal and preserve the truth as we are to discover it. Still, there are many with whom this argument, if we may use that word, would have no force whatever. They recognise no particular authority in the word of Scripture, and demand that every statement in it must stand upon its own merits. And this is a demand that cannot be denied them. There can be no doubt that if Scripture does not appeal to us by its reasonableness, consistency and general trustworthiness, it must presently cease to have any recognised authority among thinking men. We recollect several years ago reading a speech of a former Lord Salisbury, in which he stated that the doctrine of the resurrection was the "bulwark" of Christianity. In a sense that is correct, although it is very doubtful whether, if the enemy gained the bulwark, he would at the same time secure the citadel also. In the days of the old "wooden walls" many an enemy scaled over the sides and even on to the deck of some of our ships, but they got no further. If the bulwark should be taken, in this case the extraordinary and wonderful resurrection of Jesus—if this could be proven untrustworthy, the citadel—the life and glorious work He accomplished—still remains. Nevertheless, the importance of the story of the resurrection cannot be denied, and possibly there are many people in Christendom fully prepared to make it the first and last line of defence. They are ready to marshal all

their forces, and confront the whole power of the enemy on this one point. Paul takes up that attitude in 1 Cor. $15^{12ff.}$ We must recognise that while Christological glory reaches its summit on the Mount of Transfiguration, it depends upon the attestation of the resurrection of Jesus as a confirmation of the possibility and reality of the experience. It is in its attesting power that the essence of the resurrection of Jesus really lies. In certain Eastern buildings the corner-stone was employed in somewhat the same way as we employ the keystone of an arch—to strengthen and consolidate the building; the resurrection of Jesus is, in this sense, the chief corner-stone of our Christological teaching. It gives both foundation and binding force to the whole structure, and without it the safety of the erection would be endangered. We must, therefore, be alive to the full importance of establishing it as a fact.

So far as St. Mark's Gospel is concerned, the evidence is not cumbersome, nor difficult to examine. If we believe the Gospel finished at verse 8, chapter 16, then it consists of the evidence of three women, who had gone together, early on the first day of the week, to anoint the body of Jesus with sweet spices, and had found the sepulchre empty save for an angel sitting there, who said: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him" (16^{6}). But we do not feel that we are bound to accept the eighth verse as closing the Gospel. The question is one, of course, for textual criticism, and a good deal can be urged on both sides. It cannot be denied that to end this book with the

words "for they were afraid" is very unnatural. There is no doubt that the present ending in A.V. was in circulation very early, and whether it is the work of St. Mark himself or some other equally early writer, it contains material which is all corroborated elsewhere, so far as the resurrection is particularly concerned. This subject has been much debated, and there is quite a mass of literature advocating the various views; but we cannot, of course, enter fully into the discussion of these. If we obtain from other reliable sources sufficient confirmation of the story as told by the women in Mark 16^{1-8}, it ought to justify our position.

1. Let us, however, first of all, see if we can assure ourselves that the three women witnesses were such as can be regarded as reliable and trustworthy. Mary of Magdala, whom Jesus had restored of a sore affliction, and who out of gratitude had been one of His followers ever since; Mary the mother of James, who also had more than once, probably, come into contact with our Lord during His ministry in Galilee, from which place she had followed Him; and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children, who had sought preferment for her sons in the Kingdom she believed Jesus was about to establish — these were all certainly sympathisers with our Lord, but so far as their history is known, there is nothing whatever to indicate they were persons likely to invent the tale of an empty sepulchre, or, indeed, that they were capable of doing so. It is to be observed their own testimony only amounts to that; the statement of the young man at the sepulchre goes much further. They make no profession of having on this occasion seen Jesus;

they receive a message for the disciples, which in their fear and amazement they forget to deliver. Now, there is a naturalness about this story thus far that cannot be disputed. These women had come hoping somehow to gain access to the remains of their beloved Master, but the very fact that they brought spices wherewith to anoint His body, shows they were not expecting an open sepulchre and an empty tomb; and it would be a safe guess to say that ninety-nine women out of every hundred would have been affected just as they were—filled with an unspeakable terror because of such an unexpected experience. It is utterly impossible to believe these three women could conspire to concoct such a story, and expect it to be believed, seeing what had happened was the very last thing they had looked for themselves. Is their evidence to be regarded as equivalent to that of but one eye-witness? Be it so, but with the understanding that a threefold cord is not easily broken. The words spoken by the young man ($16^{6, 7}$) are confirmed by the words of Jesus (14^{28}), "But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee"—uttered when none of these women was present, and not likely to be told them by any of the disciples, who appear to have attached no importance to this promise of a speedy resurrection. Of all the company of His followers, none would be so anxious, and so interested, in what was now taking place as Peter. It is but reasonable to suppose he had been grieving over his own fall since the time of his denial. Would he ever forget, then, this message which had been sent to him—"Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter"? Is it likely he would not have

investigated, to the very best of his ability, the accuracy of the women's statements, seeing his peace of mind was largely depending upon what they had to tell? He undoubtedly would have made himself certain of the reliability of this special mention, and must have treasured it throughout all his life.

2. The next stage in our evidence is that Jesus has been actually seen; but for this we must enter the disputed appendix to the Gospel. The ninth verse is extremely awkward, as we must supply a subject to *ἀναστάς*; no doubt Jesus is meant, as this word could not have reference to any other person. We do not share the objection which some critics have against the second mention of Mary Magdalene in this verse, because fresh information is being supplied—"out of whom he had cast seven devils." If this paragraph was added by Mark himself, as Salmon appears to think in chapter ix. of his *Introduction to the New Testament*, and which is not inconsistent with his position in the last paragraph of *The Human Element in the Gospels*, it might possibly have been written some time later than the former part of the Gospel, and he may have discovered this information regarding Mary Magdalene in the interval. In any case, the intention manifestly from verse 9 onwards is to indicate instances of the actual appearance of Jesus: And (1) He appeared to Mary as stated, and as is confirmed by John 20. It is not needful to suppose there is any inconsistency in the stories as told by Mark and John regarding this appearance. It is probable they are dealing with the same occurrence; but while the other Mary and Salome may have departed speedily from the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene possibly lingered on, and

was rewarded with a sight of the Lord Himself. (2) Next He appears *in another form* to two of them. This no doubt refers to the account in Luke $24^{13ff.}$, but has much less detail; indeed, there is a possible discrepancy between our thirteenth verse and Luke $24^{33, 34}$. The point, however, is well established that this was another fresh appearance. (3) Lastly, in this Gospel, He appears to the eleven as recorded in Luke $24^{33ff.}$ And, in this instance again, practically no particulars are forthcoming. There is the same scantiness of information found in the appendix to this Gospel that we discovered in its introduction, and this circumstance certainly favours the Marcan authorship. Moreover, it is necessary to remember that, if we accept Harnack's most recent view as to its date, we must put it some time before A.D. 60, so that it would not be very far removed from the incidents recorded in it. It is certainly possible the conclusion (verses 9–20) was later than the preceding part of the work; but that does not actually affect the testimony of the passage, as this is also found in St. Luke, which Harnack puts at A.D. 60. The details in the first part of 16^{1-8} we may believe were supplied by St. Peter, who was in close touch with all that was taking place. It is not impossible that St. Matthew's account is at least revised, and corrected, by information obtained through his own personal observations and experiences. St. Luke seems to have tapped several independent sources in the composition of this part of his Gospel. We know St. John's testimony is that of an eyewitness. All these records agree in supporting the main portion of the story in St. Mark, that Jesus rose again early on the morning of the third

day. St. Paul undoubtedly went most thoroughly into this whole matter, and gives the result of his investigations in 1 Cor. 15, which may be taken as a carefully thought-out statement of the position at about A.D. 57. But this Apostle really asserts his belief in the resurrection of Jesus in practically every Epistle. In 1 Thess., the earliest, and put by Salmon in his *Introduction* (p. 363) at about A.D. 52, he writes that the Thessalonian Christians had not only turned from idols "to serve the living God," but, "to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." This is within twenty years of the event itself. As St. Mark's Gospel was probably written for Romans, we ought to remember that, about the same time as it was written, Paul was sending to them an Epistle not only declaring his belief in the resurrection of Jesus, but showing the Christological importance it possessed. . . . "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. $1^{3f.}$). Thus there is complete corroboration throughout the New Testament of the statements which we find in the concluding chapter of St. Mark respecting the resurrection of Jesus. This is a most formidable body of evidence, taking us back to a very early date, and it will be difficult to set it aside. Let us see how it is proposed to do that.

1. There is, first of all, the extreme position taken up by the modern representatives of the Sadducees, which affirms that a physical resurrection in any

form is an improbability, and the story of the rising again of Jesus on the third day is therefore incredible. Well, we fall back upon the very good maxim, *Neganti incumbit probatio.* We have a right to demand some proof in support of this denial; but all that is forthcoming appears to be the phrase, *Id non potest.* There is no attempt made to overthrow or discredit the evidence; and there hardly seems any ground as a common basis for discussion. When a person simply says of such a fact as the resurrection that "it cannot be," that practically is an end to all argument. It is an extremely unreasonable attitude, but not a few people appear to think that because we do not know how a thing is possible, it is therefore impossible. We do not know *how* the soul which is spiritual, affects the body which is material, but we are assured it does so; we have sufficient evidence of the fact. There is likewise abundant evidence of this other fact, but it is simply ignored by materially minded people, who calmly affirm that the dead rise not. We have, however, dealt with this point briefly in our preliminary remarks concerning miracles, and do not further enlarge upon it here. It is manifestly an indefensible position to adopt, for the evidence *must* be taken into consideration.

2. Seeing the force of this contention, there are critics who, possessed by the same ideas of the impossibility of the physical resurrection, yet feel it necessary to take up a more moderate attitude, or at least realise they must give some thought to the accounts in the New Testament, of the general belief in the rising of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead. Their method is to discredit the evidence,

and this on two grounds: (1) it was a deliberate concoction by a post-apostolic generation; or (2) it is due to the imagination of the disciples, who were themselves deceived. These points have been discussed and answered by Christian apologists time and again. Perhaps the existence of the Christian Church itself is the best answer to give to the first. There can be no doubt that the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus is one of its foundation-stones. Would it have withstood the storms of dreadful persecutions, the afflictions and sorrows that history shows fell upon the early Christians on account of their faith; could the infant Church have grappled with, and to such a considerable extent overcome, the heathen world, if it had rested upon a foundation which was false? The men who invented such a story as this, must have had great faith in their powers to deceive the people, not only of that time, but of subsequent generations. Men were no more likely to believe such a tale in the first century than they are in the twentieth. There must also have been a considerable number of people in the plot, for the theme pervades the whole New Testament. The probabilities, therefore, of such a scheme miscarrying were very great—obviously there was much danger that some one would betray the secret. As the Jewish leaders were considerably interested in this subject, it is strange that they tamely submitted to such a system of misrepresentation, so far as we can gather, without a protest. It is equally beyond our understanding that the early leaders of the Church, who must have known the facts, were ready to submit to suffering, and even death, rather than deny that Jesus was alive again. What interest

was to be served by setting such a story afoot? Hatred of Judaism, perhaps! But Judaism received its death-blow in A.D. 70. Why need we multiply objections? The disciples and early leaders of the Church, so far as we can know anything of them, were men morally, spiritually, and intellectually incapable of such duplicity. Their whole training, and subsequently their whole teaching, were in entire opposition to such an invention. One thing the Gospel narrative makes exceedingly plain, viz. that they themselves shared in the common belief that a physical resurrection was not possible, until the rising of Jesus shattered their unbelief for ever.

3. Feeling the force of the objection that, ethically, the disciples were incapable of deceiving others, there are certain objectors prepared to take up the position that they were themselves deceived. They were led to expect a resurrection of Jesus, and the thing that they looked for actually happened. Well, admitted it is often true that we see what we look for, yet, surely, it cannot be denied that the disciples did not look for the resurrection of their Master. They certainly had been prepared to expect it. By whom? Jesus. If He thus taught them to eagerly await that which was never intended to take place, He was morally responsible, and the duplicity is transferred from them to Him. The position is not helped by doing so. We have already observed that we have absolutely no reason for thinking these early leaders were uncritical, gullible men. Their writings show the very reverse. The atmosphere of Matt. 28^{17}, Luke 24, John $20^{24ff.}$ shows they were extremely critical, and very difficult to convince on the point at issue.

4. It may possibly be suggested that the testimony of the various New Testament writers respecting the resurrection of Jesus is not harmonious, that there are discrepancies and disagreements. We doubt if there be any real disagreements in detail, but that there are differences in the various accounts cannot be denied. This, of course, goes to strengthen, not to weaken, the evidence. If they had been found all telling the same story, in the same way, there would have been strong suspicion of collusion; but small differences assure us of independence and of private research and inquiry. The disagreements of witnesses are often very important, providing they agree on the main story, as attesting independence of judgment. Now, whatever differences there may be among the writers in their record of details respecting the resurrection of Jesus, there is absolute agreement as to the fact itself.

5. Although it is drawing us somewhat away from our main purpose, we feel we ought to mention that the New Testament does not give any precise information as to the real character of the resurrection body. The words "physical resurrection" which we have used once or twice already perhaps require some qualification. In St. Mark 16^{12} we read: "After that he appeared in another form," etc. We think these words are most significant. Menzies simply says: "On the 'other form' we compare, of course, the narrative of the Transfiguration (9^{2})." Yes, truly; but is there not more involved than that? Do not the words "in another form" imply that His manifestation was different to these two disciples from what it had been to

Mary Magdalene? Swete takes up this point in his note on the words, which he says "suggest a transformation analogous to that described in 9^2; but the account in Luke forbids this; there was clearly nothing in the Lord's appearance to distinguish Him from any other wayfaring man. The words must be explained as contrasting the Magdalene's impression (verse 9) with that received by the two; to her He had seemed to be a κήπουρός; to them He appeared in the light of a σύνοδοιπόρος." It is manifest, from nearly all the narratives, that some change had taken place in the bodily appearance of Jesus. He was the same, and yet not precisely the same. There were times when He could be readily recognised, and other times when He could not. His body was no longer under the limitations of time and place to which it had formerly been subjected. The resurrection body was a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15^{44}), and it essentially differed in some way from the former natural body, but how we cannot tell; yet the difference was not such as to destroy continuity, individuality, or recognisability.

6. The last point we need urge in support of the resurrection of Jesus is, that it is inconceivable that the Jews would have missed the opportunity of proving the disciples were wrong in their declaration of this fact, if they had been in a position to do so. The best reply they had, their clearest justification for the crucifixion of Jesus, was the sealed tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. We may be sure that if they could have pointed to an unbroken seal, or have shown the remains of Jesus still resting in His rocky sepulchre, they would have done so. They did not,

we are satisfied, because they could not. Instead, they endeavoured to start a tale of theft on the part of the disciples (Matt. $28^{11ff.}$), the self-evident improbability and falseness of which prevented it from taking hold of the public mind.

We believe the evidence for the resurrection of our Lord, carefully tested and fairly considered, will be found absolutely reliable. That as a fact it baffles our powers to explain cannot be denied; but the evidence is there, and we must either accept it or reject it. We do not close our eyes to the difficulties of acceptance; but are those of rejection any easier? They involve nothing less than a contradiction of the whole Scriptural position, and in the end must lead to the moral and spiritual dethronement of Jesus Christ. Faith, however, guides us here when sight cannot point the way, and in Jesus of Nazareth we discover the conqueror of death and the grave. In spirit, we go to "see the place where the Lord lay," and gaze upon the mystery of the ages—Death and Life; and the glorious light of inspiration breaks in upon our souls, for the all-powerful hath "swallowed up death in victory" (Isa. 25^{8}).

CHAPTER XV

"GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD"

THE Gospel according to St. Mark may be likened to a piece of music in which the composer, after asserting the main theme, often leaves it and takes up other phrases, some of which being in the minor mode are depressing and sorrowful; but still the original theme is asserted at times, and then, at last, it comes out with impressive distinctness as the composition draws to a close. The dominating theme of the Gospel is the power of Jesus, and the keynote is the Divine Sonship: these appear in the very first paragraphs. They are sometimes lost sight of, to reappear again as circumstances seem to require their emphasis. There are many modulations into the minor in the references to suffering and death, but the main theme comes out grand and bright in the resurrection of our Lord; and in this fact, and in the giving of the commission to the disciples, the keynote is firmly reasserted again ere the Gospel draws to a close. It is true the affirmation of power is not so prominent here as in the corresponding passage in St. Matthew; but such difference as there may be in this respect is more apparent than real; it is in fact only verbal. Still, it is interesting to notice the variation between the apostolic commission as found in Matthew and as it is discovered in

St. Mark. In the former it relates only to preaching and teaching, and although it is prefaced by the words, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," yet the connection shows that spiritual power is what is meant. St. Mark lacks the preface just mentioned; and the commission is not only to preach, teach, and baptise, but as signs of their being His successors the disciples were authorised to carry on His work of healing, and enjoy a measure of immunity themselves from certain accidents of a poisonous nature. Their power, however, was to be in Him; the charm, if we may use that expression, that was to be used in removing sickness was the words, "In the name of Jesus." This is Mark's equivalent for Matthew's "All power is given unto," etc. Possibly the form of the commission in St. Mark is older than that in St. Matthew, because it seems likely to have been written at a time when the physical power of Jesus was fresh in the minds of His followers, and when it was understood that they, in some measure, were to possess the same power. We find a striking resemblance between the close of the Earliest Gospel and that of the latest in respect to these signs; there being this difference, however—that in Mark the full effect of their attestation of the heavenly origin and Divinity of Christ is not asserted as in St. John's Gospel. We think, also, St. Mark's form is earlier than St. Matthew's, because of the purer spiritual conception of the power in the latter Gospel. Evidently it is now realised that in this direction the Kingdom and power and glory of Christ were to be found. The form as it is discovered in St. Mark would certainly appeal more to a Roman

reader. He would desire some tangible evidence of this supposed omnipotence, so that in this promise to perform miracles, we may say there is more in St. Mark's commission than in St.Matthew's. Of course, it was to be expected that when Jesus had suffered and passed away, this power which He possessed should go with Him. St. Mark is the only Gospel writer who indicates that He thus endowed His immediate followers, and his account is confirmed by subsequent incidents in the Acts. It is a somewhat remarkable situation, if not one unparalleled in religious history, which is here revealed. We have already seen the impressive effect that was produced by the miraculous works of Jesus; we have become aware also that this power was to some extent delegated by our Lord to His disciples when He sent them forth to teach and to preach; and now we learn that, although His presence is to be taken from them, even though He has suffered the shock of death, He still claims the power unabated and undiminished; and He bequeaths it as a legacy to His Apostles. In the circumstances, we believe they would feel that no greater assurance of His Divinity than this could be given. Although He goes away from them, His Lordship over them and their acts, over disease and suffering, remained precisely as it had been while He was with them. In these days after the resurrection, they were beginning more distinctly to understand Him and the nature of His Kingdom. Equipped with this power they might, therefore, do wonderful things, and the universalism that they had claimed for the Messianic Kingdom might, after all, be realised. They were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to

every creature. The whole world was to be won for Jesus of Nazareth. And so we find the future mission of the disciples was to be precisely the same as that which had occupied their Master. Their supreme work was to teach and preach; only in a subsidiary way were they to regard themselves as healers; and all this work could only be carried on through the power of His Name. The promise of His spiritual presence to be with them during the ages is also absent from St. Mark; the idea, however, is found in the words, "The Lord working with them." The thought of the continual power and presence of the Christ is left upon us by these closing verses. But if He had this power, and if He thus was present, it must have been because He was the Son of God, the Messiah long promised to the world. No human man could claim to bestow his powers upon his disciples in the way that Jesus did. Now, we discover that He has been right in His attitude all along, that He had correctly interpreted the Messianic rôle, and employed suitable means for the establishment of Messiah's rule. It is a Kingdom that is spiritual, still it is real, and because of its spiritual character He can be with them, and working through them, until the latest ages. Their work shall not fail, and the great dreams of the poets and prophets shall all be realised. Immanuel is a sign; and, although Jesus departs, Immanuel remains.

The last picture of Christ that St. Mark places before us is that of the ascension, in words beautifully simple and plain: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." That is to say, having finished the work that had been given Him

to do, He went back to the glory with the Father which He had before the foundation of the world (John $17^{3f.}$). Having humiliated Himself as a Son, and been made perfect through suffering, He received the place of supreme honour and glory. St. Luke furnishes us with fuller details of the ascension, but as a simple summary the words just quoted cannot be surpassed. They leave room for the imagination to work, certainly; but what can human imagination do in a case of the kind? It is transparently evident that the writers of our Gospel narratives believed Jesus went out and in among His followers for a period after He arose from the grave, and, when this period was finished, they were convinced they saw Him ascend up into the heavens. St. Mark is no doubt beholden to St. Peter for the idea of sitting "on the right hand of God." Jesus had stated to the High Priest that He was the Messiah, and added, "and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power" (14^{62}). This is the proper conclusion to the life of Christ, as well as a fitting finish to the Gospel. A life such as He had lived—of perfect obedience, of deepest humiliation—must in the end be crowned with a glorious exaltation. The darkness of the valley is dispelled, at length, by the brightness of the Eternal Sunshine of heaven. Strange that Jesus now took no farewell of His followers, such as He had done in the upper room before He suffered. He has but a few brief instructions to impart, a promise to make, a commission to give, and then He is received up into glory without "sadness of farewell." The feeling left upon us, by all the narratives, is the pervasive sense of His presence—

He is going away, yet His Spirit is remaining with them, and by this they are to conquer the world. St. Mark's Gospel commences with the words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and it closes with a picture of the Lord ordaining that His Gospel was to be preached to every creature: and that after that He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. As the author started so he concludes, and in the intervening chapters we find nothing discordant with these most lofty Christological presentations.

Conclusion

We now approach the conclusion of our study. It but remains for us to gather up the impressions that we have received by the way, and from them to form, if possible, a distinct picture or impression of Jesus of Nazareth, as He is represented in this Earliest Gospel. This is not by any means an easy undertaking. Its difficulty will be realised when we remind ourselves that even the Early Fathers found it perplexing to estimate the worth of the contribution St. Mark's Gospel gave to Christology. When affixing the symbols of Ezekiel's four living creatures to the four Gospels, in a quartette of catalogues given by Early Fathers, St. Mark has a different figure given each time. It is represented as the eagle, the lion, the calf, and the man. This indicates the varied opinions entertained respecting the Gospel in ancient times. It is not possible to say whether there would be perfect agreement now, but, perhaps, many would be prepared to regard it as the Gospel of Christ's humanity. When we

think of the great amount of work He did in helping the distressed, diseased and down-trodden, we can appreciate the appropriateness of this name and idea. Yet, as we have already seen, His humanity is not emphasised or prominently dwelt upon in the book. A writer (Henry Burton) in the *Expositor* (vol. ii., 1875) says: "In Mark we see the face of the patient ox. It is Christ the servant; going about doing good; bearing men's burdens; walking up and down the furrows of common life, carrying a yoke that is self-imposed; servant of all, whether bound to the plough or bound to the altar" (p. 26). Now, to show the diversity of opinion that may arise, when reading over that passage we could only think of its complete appropriateness to St. Matthew's Gospel, and how that this author took these very acts as a fulfilment of Isa. 53^4: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Perhaps if we are to arrive at a proper conclusion, we could not do better than cease to compare one Gospel with another, but remind ourselves that St. Mark's is the earliest, and fancy ourselves in a position where we had it alone. What are the outstanding characteristics in it which would indelibly fix themselves upon our minds? Or to put it differently, believing this Gospel was written to Romans who had none other, what impression or impressions would be left upon them after hearing it read? Probably about the time they would receive it, or perhaps a little earlier, as we have formerly stated, St. Paul's Epistle had already arrived, in which a lofty view of the resurrected Saviour was presented to them. After reading this Gospel, we may be assured they would be satisfied

(1) that Jesus was a real man, who had lived and acted like other men but a few years before; (2) that He was a man of the warmest possible sympathy and compassion for others, taking it as one of the supreme objects of His earthly life to minister to those in distress; (3) that in His ministry He revealed the possession of an extraordinary power, whereby He was enabled to perform some wonderful deeds; (4) that He might have become the ruler over His people, if He had chosen temporal sovereignty, and used His power to the furtherance of that object; (5) instead, He preferred suffering and death, insisting that His Kingdom was spiritual; (6) that eventually His disciples were so impressed by the manner of His life, by the power which He exercised, that they believed Him to be the Messiah of God; (7) that although He was in the end put to death, He rose again from the dead on the third day, and was seen by several of His friends and by all His disciples; (8) that after a period of more or less indefinite and extraordinary intercourse with them, He was received up into heaven. All these things, at the very least, the Romans would receive from a study of this Gospel. They would also know something about the circumstances under which it had been produced, and would, we may presume, be satisfied that the story told of Jesus therein was reliable. They would learn from other sources that this Gospel did not create Jesus of Nazareth, and that His Messiahship was not a dream of the writer. They would discover that the Epistle addressed to them by St. Paul contained the very same Christological teaching, and the one document would be regarded as a corroboration of

the other. Now, if these are some of the effects produced on the earliest readers, the material that originated them is still found in the volume, and the high Christological position taken up in it is only enhanced by the writings of others who came after. If we might gather the foregoing eight points into a sentence, we would say this Gospel of St. Mark shows us the Son of Man becoming the Son of God, through a life of power which even death could not weaken. It is, we believe, the earliest distinct portrait the world possesses of Jesus of Nazareth. As a summary of the Christology of the Gospel, the following extract from Dr. Moffatt's *Theology of the Gospels* (p. 12) is very suggestive and helpful: "Mark's Gospel is the story of Jesus as a supernatural figure, compelling homage from the invisible world of demons, and exercising the powers of divine forgiveness and authority on earth as Son of God and Son of Man. Mark, as Wellhausen observes, is not writing *de vita et moribus Jesu*. He essays, indeed, to make His personality vivid, but that personality has a Divine vocation which supplies the controlling interest of the story: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In this respect the Christology of Mark is not so distant from the essential features of the Fourth Gospel."

But it is to the supernaturalness of the figure that objection may be raised. The story as told, in many aspects, undoubtedly transcends human experience, and is bound, therefore, to create doubts in the mind of some students as to its genuineness. Many persons will ask with varied purposes in view, whether the portrait of the Christ painted in this Gospel is a good, genuine, lifelike likeness, or

whether the material at the artist's disposal has not been so wrought upon as to produce a good picture rather than a faithful portrait? We feel this question would not be put if there were not in the Gospel the presentation of Jesus as a "supernatural figure," to keep to Dr. Moffatt's phrase. Well, let us by a mental effort endeavour to remove the supernatural out of the Gospel story, and what have we left? Practically nothing—nothing that is really intelligible. This Gospel is so steeped in matter that transcends human experience, the natural and supernatural are so intertwined, that they cannot be separated without destroying the work as a whole. And we cannot blind our eyes to the naturalness with which the supernatural is treated. It seems always the right thing for Jesus to exercise extraordinary power, but nobody else does so. As we have already discovered, He, in this respect, as in practically every other, stands a man apart. It is very strange that this should be so, if there were not something inherent in Him which was not possessed by any other person. If He were not such a Person in fact, as is here described in this Gospel, how are we to account for the conception? If the supernatural is a stumbling-block to many to-day, it was no less so in the second half of the first century. We find repeated emphasis laid upon the want of understanding, upon the crass unbelief of the disciples. The miracles are as great a surprise to them as to anyone else; the death of Christ implied at first the complete destruction of their hopes; His resurrection utterly amazed and confounded them by its unexpectedness. The whole atmosphere is one of mental opposition

to the miraculous. Perhaps it is suggested that these are but artistic touches to give a colouring of reality to the narrative. Well, we are not so credulous as to believe that these authors had such highly developed powers as would enable them to weave such a wonderful tale about a simple village carpenter. Supposing Mark, the earliest of the Gospel writers, had been able, and that his story was really such a work of fiction, is it likely Matthew, Luke, and John would have followed him? It surely is a most gratuitous assumption to imagine truth had so utterly forsaken them. Is there anything whatever in their known history that would lead us to suppose they were men of that stamp? The answer is emphatically, no. Are we to believe that these men entered into a secret conspiracy to withhold the truth, and to produce a fictitious tale of the Christ? We are not disposed to accept any such idea; we do not believe a conspiracy like this could have been secured and maintained in the circumstances. Such a plot has only a chance of succeeding if it is but the work of one person, or at least, that a very few participate in the secret. The story of Jesus was the common heritage of all His followers. Was St. Paul in this combine, and how was he secured to such an undertaking? Was there none among the followers of Jesus in the quarter or half century after His death who had respect for truth and honesty? It is impossible to suppose all Christianity was embraced in a great secret confederacy to keep the truth about Jesus from the world at this time. But if it were, would the Jews have permitted that? When these Gospels began to appear and circulate, we

may be quite certain they would be studied by the Jewish rulers—the first opponents of Christianity; and we may be equally assured that had there been anything in them unreliable, or that could have been proven by the scribes and lawyers to be false, they would certainly have done so. The hostility of the Judaistic section of Christianity to Paul, and the known opposition of the Jews to the Christians, are factors that we must take into account in estimating the probable genuineness of the Gospel stories. Paul would never have become a party to anything that was not strictly in accordance with fact; the Jews would soon have exposed the fiction of the Christians had they been able to do so.

We may dismiss in a few sentences the suggestion that the Gospel writers were themselves deceived, or that they were engaged portraying an ideal rather than a real Messiah. This position is taken up by some writers, only because the one we have just discussed is found untenable. If it were a case of self-deception, or idealising of the life of Jesus, in regard to St. Mark's Gospel who is responsible? Admit that it was possible that St. Peter's imagination ran into excess when he was telling the story, are we to suppose that the Evangelist's mental faculties were similarly out of proportion when he was writing it out? Or to whom shall we attribute the power of conceiving the ideal life depicted in this Gospel—the Galilean fisherman, or Mark his interpreter? We are told by some writers that Peter could not write good Greek. Is it likely, then, he could have imagined this story told in the Earliest Gospel? We fancy he could only be eloquent in his narration because he was telling facts that had

come within his own experience. Could Mark, on the other hand, if left to himself, have given those autoptic touches so frequently revealed in the narrative? It is very improbable. The only explanation which is satisfactory is that he was describing what Peter saw, and Peter could only relate the facts so well because he had seen the incidents actually taking place. Not the most vivid imagination could evolve from nothing the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and expect to be believed. It is not the sort of tale that would suggest itself to any human mind. It would, moreover, require a good deal of idealising to account for the appearances of Jesus after He had risen from the dead. There are things that seem beyond the power of the mind to conceive, and these are some of them.

A few paragraphs further back, in writing on the resurrection of Jesus, we said, "Jesus and His work—Jesus and His death remain." It seems we were wrong in thus affirming the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth. In the *Hibbert Journal* for October 1921 there is an article under the name of Mr. Gilbert T. Saddler reviewing *The Life of Christ: A Short Study*, by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, D.D. Mr. Saddler's review is really an attack on the historicity of Jesus and the Gospels. Referring to Dr. Campbell's point that "'Jesus' is given in the Church experience," he says: "Yet this experience of 'Christ' by the Church does not give historicity to the stories in the Gospels." . . . "Perhaps there was no man Jesus. 'He' was the Infinite in the finite." The Gnostics had discovered the secret. "The records of symbolic stories of healing, and walking

on the sea of trouble, and raising those dead in sin, became historised. Yet that process was not effected by the Church's inner experience of Christ, but by the lack or dwindling of that experience. As the vision faded, the symbols of spiritual experience became misunderstood and historised, and after A.D. 70 they began to be written as stories of a *man* Jesus, who never lived. Jesus (Joshua= Jehovah as Saviour) originally was the Gnostic man, the Heavenly Man divine, who was crucified into the universe, as the pre-Christian Gnostics taught." But, to use a phrase of the author of these words applied to Dr. Campbell, "How is all this known to" Mr. Saddler? And he writes as positively as if his feet were firmly placed upon the solid rock of truth instead of upon the sands of his own imagination. The Christology of Paul's Epistles is just the same as that of the Gospels. There is practically little or no Gnostic influence traceable in the New Testament, and it is generally accepted that the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians are written in opposition to any such tendency. These were all written before the date mentioned in Mr. Saddler's review; and as we have seen from Harnack, so were the Gospels. We are safe in asserting there is absolutely no trace of Gnosticism in the Synoptic Gospels. Mr. Saddler must recognise that these still stand, and they must be disproved by unquestionable historical evidence before they can be set aside. What does Mr. Saddler mean anyhow by the words, "As the vision faded," etc.? What vision, of whom, or of what? So far as we can gather from the article, there was no real Christ, no historic Jesus, no spiritual insight, except to the

Gnostics. If there was no reality in the Gospel story, no Jesus of Nazareth, no moral and spiritual uplift to be had, therefore, from His life, we fail to apprehend any vision the Church could have had which has been lost.

We only seek for this Gospel and the story it tells the fair and just treatment that every ancient document should have, viz. that it be examined on its merits, and that in judging it we should put out of our minds all prejudice and preconception. The student who comes to its pages with an open mind will discover that it is a plain, unvarnished tale, told in an honest and straightforward manner. One cannot read the book from end to end without feeling that the writer rings true at every point. There is absolutely no straining after effect. No doubt, as we have seen, there are matters in it that baffle our powers to understand and explain. The man of faith will rejoice in these, because to him they will be attestations of the heavenly character of the story that is therein told; the man who must reduce everything to pure reason may hesitate and doubt, but he should ponder over the words of Harnack to his students: "If there is anything here which you find unintelligible, put it gently aside. Perhaps you will have to leave it there for ever; perhaps the meaning will dawn upon you later, and the story assume a significance of which you never dreamt." With the evidence before us, with the body of tradition which has come down to us from the very earliest centuries, with references in profane history that had no relation to Christianity, with the Christian Church reaching back to apostolic activity, no unbiassed

and thoughtful man would deny the real existence of Jesus of Nazareth, nor is anyone in a position to deny the genuineness and accuracy of His portrait presented in the Earliest Gospel. We accept it as such, believing it is a drawing from real life. But we must take care in our study of this narrative we do not ourselves emphasise unduly certain features to the exclusion of others equally important. We shall receive it with the understanding that it does not contain an absolutely complete life of our Saviour, but that it certainly sets out in a distinct and impressive manner the main facts of His earthly ministry. No book in the whole realm of literature has so affected human life as the New Testament. Many will be ready to believe that its most important section is to be found in the Gospels. We cannot, therefore, remain unmoved as we realise that, in that one which we have been studying, we discover the very earliest impressions which Jesus made upon His contemporaries. He is presented to us in many aspects, but most of them fall into the background when we enter into that section which reveals the new Messianic ideal and the spiritual character of the Kingdom. This very especially awakens our interest and arrests our attention. The keynote of this part of the book will be found in those sublime words in which our Lord enunciated His mission, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The Gospel clearly shows that this was the supreme purpose of His life.

Under the guidance of St. Peter and St. Mark, then, we have travelled with Jesus in Galilee; we

have been astonished at His works in Capernaum; we have prayed with Him on the hillside, and sympathised with His agony in the Garden; we have companied with Him through the valley of darkness to Calvary; have sorrowed with His disciples on account of His calamitous death; we have been uplifted by the story of His Transfiguration, and have seen the sun rising in splendour on His empty tomb; we have gathered with the company of the faithful on Olivet, and been amazed by His ascension into glory; faith has even opened the heavens, and our spiritual eyes have beheld Jesus seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High: in one word, we have seen a Son of Man become the Son of God —the Saviour of the world—through the power of a holy, perfect, prayerful and obedient life.

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